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IN
30

MINUTES

Dustin Johnson
shares his new
distance secrets

Practice
made perfect

On the course and the range

Spieth
exclusive

'I'll get better this year'

2016's HOTTEST...

NEW DRIVERS

First verdict on Ping's G & Callaway's XR 16





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Official fuel economy figures for the 911 Carrera 4S Coupé in mpg (l/100km): urban 22.8 – 27.4 (12.4 – 10.3), extra urban 41.5 – 42.8 (6.8 – 6.6), combined 31.7 – 35.8 (8.9 – 7.9). CO₂ emissions: 204 – 180 g/km. The mpg and CO₂ figures quoted are sourced from official EU-regulated tests, are provided for comparability purposes and may not reflect your actual driving experience.



PORSCHE

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MARCH 2016

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IJP DESIGN



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FROM THE EDITOR

Celebrate the game's pioneers

Our interviews with golf's great new innovators is an inspiring read

Critics of golf often sneer at the supposedly conservative nature of the sport. They would have you believe that a pioneer in golf is someone brave enough to put a new putter in their bag the night before the club championship, bold enough to wear a jumper without a diamond pattern, or crazy enough to add a slice of lemon to their G&T.

But golf has always produced and embraced lots of innovators, which is just as well. The game would have died in the 1800s if gutta percha had not been discovered and replaced the 'feathery'. In the feathery's era up to 1850, 15 courses were built. Within 50 years of the gutta percha ball, there were 2,300 courses.

The use of hickory in shafts was similarly revolutionary. Ash and beech was once deemed ideal wood for clubs, but were soon cast aside once the hard-but-flexible hickory was discovered.

Since those early days, rarely has a decade gone by without significant advances in course maintenance, equipment technology or swing philosophy. Innovation has been a constant theme in the history of the game, and there are now boundless areas of invention and pioneering in golf. On page 43, we tell the stories of six innovators excelling in totally different aspects of the game. One has transformed the ladies game. Another has launched his own equipment company – and signed our Open champion (right) to play it. But they are all driven by a passion to do something better.



Chris
Chris Jones, Editor

Subscribe!
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best-selling golf
magazine PLUS
two-dozen
Srixon balls
See page 66



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Visit greatmagazines.co.uk/todaysgolfer, call 01858 438 884 (overseas +44 1858 438 884) or e-mail bauer@subscription.co.uk

Small print: Calls will cost no more than 5 pence per minute from a BT landline. Calls from mobile providers and other networks may vary. All phone lines are open 8am–9.30pm Monday to Friday, Saturdays 8am–4pm.

BACK ISSUES

£4.50 (overseas £6.15). 01858 438 884 or +44 1858 438 884 (overseas).

Today's Golfer is published 13 times a year in the UK by Bauer Consumer Media Ltd, registered address 1 Lincoln Court, Lincoln Road, Peterborough, PE1 2RF. Registered number 0176085. No part of the magazine may be reproduced in any form in whole or in part, without prior permission of the publisher. All material published remains the copyright of Bauer Consumer Media Ltd. We reserve the right to edit letters, copy or images submitted to the magazine without further consent. The submission of material to Bauer Media whether unsolicited or requested, is taken as permission to publish in the magazine, including any licensed editions throughout the world. Any fees paid in the UK include remuneration for any use in any other licensed editions. We cannot accept any responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts, images or materials lost or damaged in the post. Whilst every reasonable care is taken to ensure accuracy, the publisher is not responsible for any errors or omissions nor do we accept any liability for any loss or damage, howsoever caused, resulting from the use of the magazine. Complaints: Bauer Consumer Media Limited is a member of the Independent Press Standards Organisation (www.ipso.co.uk) and endeavours to respond to and resolve your concerns quickly. Our Editorial Complaints Policy (including full details of how to contact us about editorial complaints and IPSO's contact details) can be found at www.bauermediacomplaints.co.uk. Our e-mail address for editorial complaints covered by the Editorial Complaints Policy is complaints@bauermedia.co.uk.



First Tee

THE MOST IMPORTANT
THINGS IN GOLF

EDITED BY ROB MCGARR



NIGHT GOLF

See the light!

F1 LEDs are used to illuminate first golf course

The same tech that lets Lewis Hamilton race along the streets of Singapore at night is now being used to help golfers play in the dark.

The Montgomerie Maxx Royal in Antalya, Turkey – home of the Turkish Airlines Open – has installed 120 remotely-controlled bulbs that

flood the course with LED light, the same as that used in F1's popular night races.

They're on every hole on the back nine – all 379 lights can be controlled for brightness, while each has been positioned so it doesn't cast a shadow across the playing surface and lets you track the ball's flight down the fairway.



Light it up

The 18th hole on Monty's course reveals how shadows don't interfere with play.

RICH LIST

If money's no object

You could blow more than £300,000 on the ultimate lesson, holiday and car

What would you pay for a lesson? £25 for half an hour? £100 for a day? How does £30,000 sound?

Except this is no ordinary lesson – it's a year-long plan to improve your total game, with Tiger Woods' former coach Sean Foley. He still works with several PGA Tour stars, notably Justin Rose and Hunter Mahan. But it seems he's still got time to teach us.

What do you get for your money? It's an "instruction and fitness regimen" designed to improve your game, taking in range sessions with Foley, a playing lesson and regular video assessments of your swing.

Other coaches who specialise in biomechanics and Trackman are also involved. Foley says: "The programme brings together a trio of experts for a holistic approach to game improvement that balances gym time with swing instruction and assorted custom perks."



THE LESSON
£30,000

Or pay for a lesson with..



Butch Harmon
Cost: \$1,000 / per hour

Star pupils: Dustin Johnson, Rickie Fowler



David Leadbetter
Cost: \$3,500 / three hours

Star pupil: LPGA phenom Lydia Ko



Hank Haney
Cost: \$15,000 / day

Star pupil: Tiger Woods (formerly)



Dave Stockton
Cost: \$600 / per hour

Star pupil: Rory McIlroy (just putting)



Cameron McCormick
Cost: \$250 / per hour

Star pupil: Jordan Spieth



Dave Pelz
Cost: \$20,000 / day

Star pupil: Phil Mickelson (just short game)



Chris Como
Cost: \$1,500 / half-a-day

Star pupil: Tiger Woods

Now get the holiday and the motor!

THE HOLIDAY
£44,000



Golf holidays don't come much better – or more expensive – than this 30-day Luxury World Tour planned for later this year. The £44,000 trip includes:

- Visits to five continents
- 15 countries in 30 days
- 13 of the world's most exotic courses
- 16 trips to World Heritage sites

You will be travelling in style in a private Boeing 757 VIP jet and staying in the very best hotels and resorts.

The trip will involve a maximum of 50 participants, who will play golf in the Amazon rain forest and Pacific Islands, and visit places like the Taj Mahal and Ayers Rock. www.golfmotion.com



THE CAR
£250,000

Car makers often say how many sets of clubs you can get in the boot of their latest model. But Rolls-Royce has gone one further – creating an entire car based on the game. The Ghost Golf took more than two years to make, with a colourscheme based on bunkers and fairways, door pockets lined with tartan and even persimmon in the dashboard.

NEW GEAR

Flexible friends

FootJoy's new FreeStyle shoes have been inspired by... a frog

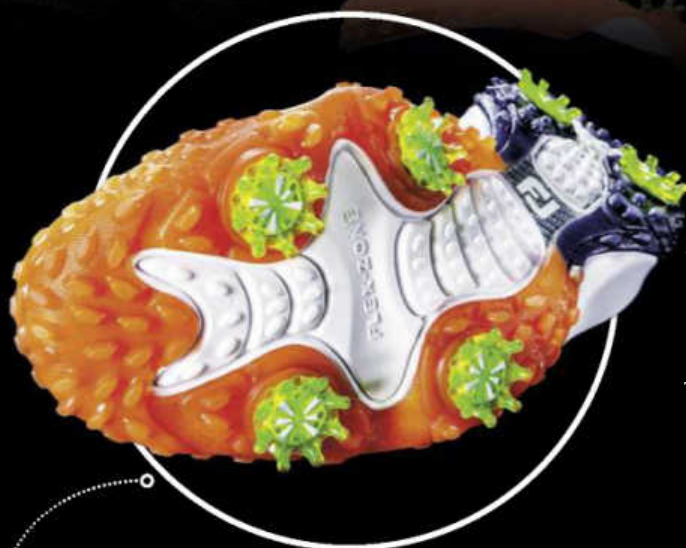
Where do you turn for inspiration when you're trying to create a new kind of golf shoe? FootJoy found theirs in the Amazonian rainforest – and the result is the new FreeStyle.

If you're asking 'how can a frog inspire a golf shoe?', you're not alone. FootJoy says their 'F.R.O.G.S. technology (Revolutionary Outsole Grip System) improves performance and comfort.

How? By providing greater freedom of movement through the swing. Traction is enhanced thanks to an outsole inspired by the red-eyed tree frog, which provides more traction as you swing. A red-eyed tree frog generates amazing gripping power on any surface thanks to its feet. So a super-flexible new SoftMax outsole provides a softer feel and extra grip, while a new midsole compound is the brand's softest yet. The translucent Pulsar cleats even look like the frog's orange feet.

"Research has proven that dynamic traction can be beneficial to players regardless of age, ability or speed of swing," says FootJoy's Richard Fryer.

● **Details:** £135/£150 BOA. Colours navy/orange/lime, white/grey/charcoal, black/white/grey, grey/green/navy, grey/navy/berry (BOA). Available March. www.footjoy.co.uk



Soft and reliable
The new translucent and super-flexible SoftMax outsole provides a softer feel and extra grip; Pulsar cleats look like the frog's feet.



More golf tech inspired by nature



Dragonfly

Ping's all-new G driver (see page 82) has a crown design based on a dragonfly's wing, to save weight. The surface area is thin, light, but strong – so Ping copied the same principle.



Sheep

The leather in FootJoy's StaSof gloves comes from the Ethiopian Hair sheep, the skin of which possesses a thin, strong, smooth surface grain ideal to help feel.



Zebra

Ram's Zebra putter had a soft, rounded shape that made it difficult to align consistently. So they came up with lines to help your aim, which became its trademark.

Q&A

Tom Watson

The legend is preparing for his final Masters, 35 years after winning it

Tom Watson will always be associated with the Open Championship. But in the 17 years from 1975 until 1991, the American won the Masters twice and finished in the top 10 a further 12 times. Last year, at the age of 65, he became the oldest player to card a sub-par round at Augusta. "At my age, that's a minor miracle," he smiled, but it wasn't enough to dissuade him from making this year's Masters his 43rd and final appearance in the event...

Q. Why is 2016 going to be your last?

The 71 I shot in the first round last year was the best round I had completed in the Masters for several years, but then I shot 81 in the second round. And when you shoot 81, it is time to say goodbye.

Q. Did you take this decision immediately after shooting the 81?

No, I knew that my time was coming six or eight years ago. I can't carry the ball far

enough to play that golf course. On holes like the 7th, 14th and 17th you need to carry it a long way to hit the green in regulation and I just don't have the tools to do that anymore.

Q. What is the best thing about Augusta's Champions' Dinner?

It is always fun listening to other players describing how they won. Everyone in that room knows how they did it, but it is fun to find out how other players won when it came down to the wire.

Q. Which victory story is your favourite?

Probably Doug Ford's from 1957. There used to be a bunker to the left of the 18th green and his ball was buried in it. If he went at the flag he might have gone off the front of the green and made double to fall into a play-off, so he looked at the slope to the left of the bunker, played out sideways and let the ball roll up the hill and then back down again. It came all the way down into the hole like Tiger's famous chip at the 16th. It was a hell of a shot, but not many people know about it.

Q. Are you hoping that your last Masters will be as successful as your last Open, where you were two-under after nine holes?

Yeah, things were going well at St Andrews. When I got to the turn, I thought: 'This is what I am out here to do.'

Unfortunately the wheels fell off with a couple of bad swings.

'Jack's last memory of an Open is a birdie. Mine is a shank and three-putt'

And I have to laugh about how I finished my second round.

Q. Because it was almost dark?

No, because my last four shots were a shank and three putts! How about that? Jack Nicklaus' last memory of playing in an Open Championship is a beautiful downhill birdie putt on the 18th at St Andrews. Mine is a shank and three-putt.

Q. Sticking with St Andrews, does the Old Course need to be modernised to cope with bombers?

Not at all. The only thing that the Old Course needs is wind and they have their fair share of it. When the wind blows the Old Course takes from golfers. When it doesn't it gives back to them.

Q. Can you see a time when a golfer over the age of 50 wins a Major?

Yeah, I think I can. The kids are all keeping themselves in such good shape nowadays. And if your body is in good shape at 50, you can really compete in your later years.

Q. After the Masters, what is next?

I am going to be playing some Champions Tour events and spending some quality time with my grandchildren. Life goes on.

Q. Do you have a bucket list of courses that you still want to play?

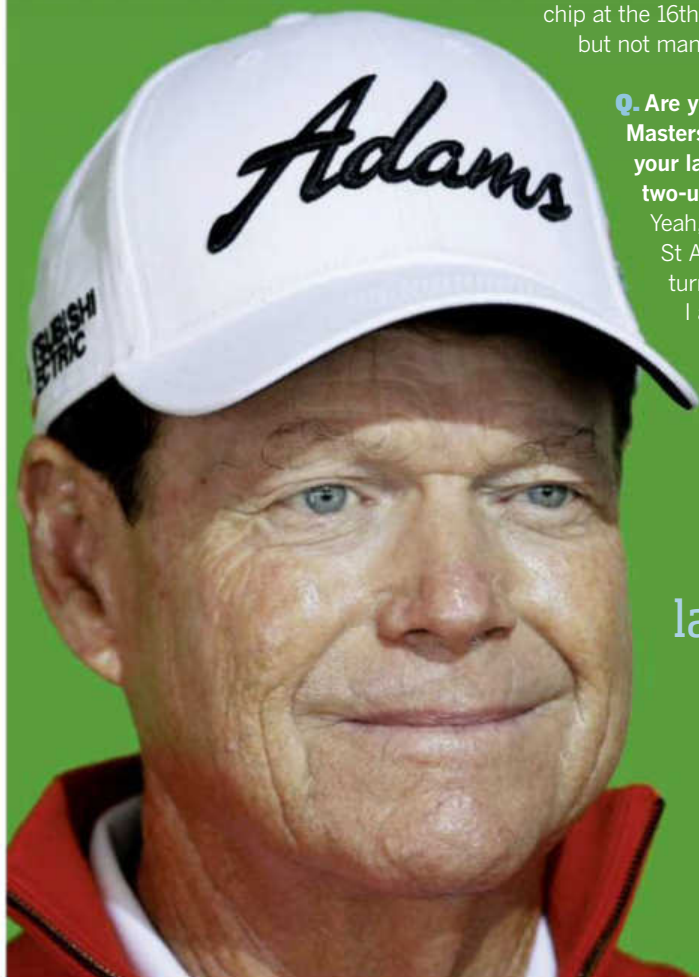
I do. I want to play Nairn and Castle Stuart and Brora and Tain. That is a trip I would like to take sometime.

Q. You came back to win after a mid-career slump. Do you think Tiger Woods can do the same?

There is a simple way back for Tiger. He has to develop a swing he trusts. I went through nine years where the game was really tough and I didn't win a PGA Tour event. Then I figured my swing out and the game was easy again. That is the place Tiger needs to get to. I know, I did it.

Q. Finally, is the game of golf in a good state at the moment?

No. We don't have enough players learning to love the game, and we don't have enough players starting the game. We are becoming less popular and it all has to do with social media and mobile phones.



EQUIPMENT

So who is PXG?

The story of the new gear firm who have signed the Open champ

If you were trying to get a foothold in the notoriously 'closed shop' that is the equipment industry, signing the reigning Open champion to use your clubs could be considered a decent statement of intent. That is exactly what PXG – Parsons Xtreme Golf – have done.

Zach Johnson is one of 12 pros who will use the PXG clubs on Tour in 2016; he's joined by Billy Horschel, Chris Kirk, Ryan Moore, James Hahn and Charles Howell III on the PGA Tour, Rocco Mediate on the Champions Tour and Cristie Kerr, Gerina Piller, Sadena Parks, Beatriz Recari and Alison Lee on the LPGA.

The firm's philosophy is simply for their clubs to 'be as good as they can be'. And PXG has one significant advantage over other equipment manufacturers as it seeks to do this – it is not battling with any cost or time constraints. While other companies have price points to hit and margins to meet, PXG clubs are merely striving for excellence in performance.

How? The founder is billionaire

Bob Parsons, who made his fortune from web hosts GoDaddy. His obsession with club technology led him to found PXG 18 months ago and lure two of golf's most respected club designers – Mike Nicolette and Brad Schweigert – from Ping. Parsons demanded sexy-looking irons that performed like cavity-backs; he wanted clubs to look like blades while also launching higher, flying further, feeling softer and "boasting a sweetspot the size of Texas". "PXG clubs have to feel like butter and the difference has to be noticeable," he said.

So Nicolette and Schweigert had an interesting task: use any materials you want, use any process you want, and spend as much as you want... just make sure the clubs are categorically better.

Parsons might be passionate about golf, but he is a businessman. So you can't buy a set of these amazing new clubs for £399. You can't even buy them for £899. A full set will cost you up to £3,500 – and plans are in place to make it available in the UK.

Tungsten plugs

High-density tungsten alloy weights – which create the irons' signature look – are positioned around the edges to boost MOI and forgiveness.

Clever internals

PXG says an ultra-thin face coupled with a structural thermoplastic elastomer material (TPE) produces a more efficient energy transfer, resulting in higher ball speeds.

FOR AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH BOB PARSONS SEE P48

WHAT MAKES THEM SO SPECIAL?



Zach Johnson is one of the most meticulous players on tour, so "the decision to put PXG clubs in play was not one I took lightly". He added: "My entire team, from caddie to coach, was part of the discernment process. We all agree that PXG is undeniably the best equipment to help me achieve my goals." This is why they're different...

- The ultra-thin face in the irons is formed from HT1770 high-strength steel and the weight saved by the thin face allows more mass to be positioned in areas of the clubhead to optimise launch and MOI.
- The body is forged from S25C soft carbon steel. Forged materials, having a tight grain structure,

resonate differently than cast materials which adds to feel and feedback.

- PXG's 0811 driver features 16 movable weights and an adjustable hosel. The PXG 0341 fairway woods also feature the adjustable Precision Weighting System. Eleven interchangeable weights on the sole allow optimisation.

RULES

Lie detector

When you can – and can't – pick your ball up this winter

There's lots of things to love about winter golf, and one of the best is preferred lies, or 'winter rules'. But there are things you need to know before you pick up your ball in the middle of the fairway. Here's our guide.

● **You can...**

Move your ball only when a committee has introduced a Local Rule for preferred lies. Simply saying "preferred lies in operation" or "winter rules apply" is inadequate; a Committee has to spell out what the Local Rule is. Under the wording of The R&A's recommended Local Rule, a player is entitled to prefer their lie when the ball is on a closely-mown area through the green, such as the fairway.

● **You can...**

Mark your ball. Most players use a tee, but a coin or other object is OK. Once the ball has been marked, you can pick it up and clean it if desired. The ball must then be placed on a spot no nearer the hole within the area specified by the Committee, normally within six inches.

● **You can't...**

Assume you can place the ball within six inches. Some committees say within six inches, others a scorecard-length or even a club-length. There is no hard rule, so check in advance. PGA Tour star Ryuji Imada incurred 26-stroke penalty when he wrongly assumed he could replace his

ball within a club-length. The local rule said a scorecard, so he was handed a two-stroke penalty for each of the 13 times he'd wrongly replaced his ball!

● **You can't...**

Just move your ball six inches with your club to a nicer piece of grass. You must mark the position of the ball before moving it.

● **You can't...**

Prefer your lie more than once, so choose



Beware!
If your ball is plugged off the fairway.



Pick and place

If winter rules apply, you can mark your ball on the fairway, lift, clean and place – but check with the course on specifics.

the spot you want to move it to carefully. The ball is in play as soon as it's back on the ground. If you don't like the lie and move it again, it's a penalty stroke for moving a ball in play (Rule 18-2a).

● **You can...**

Place a ball in the rough if a Local Rule allows. Generally, there is no free relief for a ball embedded in the rough.

● **You can...**

Gain relief for a ball embedded in its own pitch-mark in a closely-mown area through the green (Rule 25-2). However, where the ground is unusually soft, the Committee may, by temporary Local Rule, allow the lifting of an embedded ball anywhere "through the green" if it is satisfied that the proper playing of the game would otherwise be prevented.

WE'RE LOOKING FORWARD TO...

1 Golf in Parliament

MPs have formed the All-Party Golf Group. What does it mean? Lincoln MP Karl McCartney is its Chairman, and he told us: "There is more that can be done to ensure the opportunities to play are there and barriers to being involved are removed."

2 Dunne's debut

Paul Dunne – the Irish amateur who led the Open at St Andrews – is now a pro and will make his PGA Tour debut at the AT&T Pebble Beach, alongside Jordan Spieth and Jason Day.



3 Trying this

Garmin's new fenix 3 Sapphire will have golf GPS info for 40,000 courses and wrist-based heart rate tech. Plus it actually looks like a watch with a titanium or leather strap. From £469.99.

4 The Golf Show

Benross, Callaway, Cobra, Nike, Ping, Srixon, TaylorMade, Titleist and Wilson are all signed up for The Golf Show by American Golf, which takes place at Event City in Manchester over the weekend of February 27-28.

5 Will they get on?

Lots of players have switched brands for 2016, notably Zach Johnson (Titleist to PXG – see page 15) and Brooks Koepka (Titleist to Nike). It's always interesting to see how former winners adapt to their new sticks.





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The Vapor Speed Driver is designed to maximise forgiveness, featuring FlexLoft system offering 15 different launch angles and lofts to optimise ball flight and spin rate!



TaylorMade

ON SALE

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COBRA

ON SALE

Baffler XL Driver

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Save a Massive 50%!

The Baffler XL Driver draws heavily on Cobra's vast experience in designing offset drivers, combined with e9 Face Technology to deliver higher, straighter, more draw bias shots!



COBRA

ON SALE

Baffler XL Fairway Wood

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Save a Massive 46%!

The Baffler XL Fairway features an offset design that is intended to help most golfers correct their slices and high fades, whilst also offers smooth turf interaction with glide rails!



COBRA

ON SALE

Baffler XL Hybrid

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Save a Massive 50%!

The Baffler XL Hybrid is designed for the mid-to-high handicap players and aspiring golfers looking for outstanding forgiveness and added distance with an easy launch club!



NIKE GOLF

ON SALE

Air Sport Stand Bags

Was: £119.99

NOW: £79.99

Save a Massive 33%!

The Air Sport bag features the EquaFlex Max Air™ double strap system for a comfortable hauling, plus it's loaded with great features!



NIKE GOLF

ON SALE

Method MOD Milled Putters

Was: £229.99

NOW: £119.99

Save a Massive 48%!

The classic Method MOD Putters are milled from a single block of stainless steel with softer polymer grooves that starts the ball on a stable forward roll!



TaylorMade

ON SALE

Catalina Cart Bags

Was: £169.99

NOW: £99.99

Save a Massive 41%!

The Catalina Cart Bag, most notably is re-designed with a 15-way individual top that provides a cleaner and more protective organisation for your clubs!



BRIDGESTONE GOLF

ON SALE

Extra Soft Golf Balls (24 Pack)

Was: £43.99

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3
GREAT
WAYS
TO SHOP

Your say...

Bandits, leaky shoes and the weather have dominated our inbox recently

LETTER OF THE MONTH

If only they'd leave the flags in the same place...



Obvious slow play fix

I have read with interest various articles over the past year regarding slow play and the reasons for it. Unfortunately, you seemed to have ignored the real reasons for play taking so long.

At my club, for example, I regularly hit magnificent, straight 250-yard tee shots right down the middle, only to find that the greenkeeping staff have moved the middle of the fairway and I find myself in the rough.

This is then compounded by the staff placing the yardage markers in the wrong place. Their position would suggest that I did not hit 250 yards, but rather closer to 200, which is obviously wrong!

When I eventually have the opportunity to play towering iron shots into the green, I then find that the staff have placed the

hole in completely the wrong position, nowhere near where my perfectly-struck iron shot landed. Sometimes the staff have it so wrong that the whole green is in the wrong place and I end up in some sort of sand-filled hole next to the incorrectly-positioned green.

Finally, they regularly place the hole in impossible positions which involves taking into account slope, break and length.

I would submit to you that if at every club the greenkeeping staff stopped placing the rough in the wrong place, the green in different positions and having slopes and breaks on the green, then the game would be a lot quicker!

TOM PHILBIN, PEEBLES

LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS

A putter from Ping's Cadence TR range, worth £139 - £209



TO THE POINT

The situation at Wentworth, where new owners have asked existing members to stump up £100,000 to stay at the club, has drawn a huge response about their predicament and membership in general.

Mark Williams

All golf clubs need to look at what they offer in terms of value. Lower joining fees or none at all would make all the difference to get more people to initially join a club. Make golf accessible to all, cater for families and you'll get more members.

Lisa Mills

After paying a huge joining fee already at Wentworth in 2004, needless to say we will NOT be rejoining and paying another £100k plus £16k per year annual fees. It's such a shame as it's a fantastic club, great courses, but I can't see it's worth that amount in fees.

Paul Ketchlove

Club loyalty is a fickle beast nowadays. If you want to retain your membership, you need to be competitive with your surrounding clubs. Any increase in fees will start members looking for better value elsewhere.

David Fletcher

You could play an awful lot of really good golf courses for far less than £100,000 a year.

Barry Quinn

Move to another club!

Lawrence Stallard

I've played the West Course and it is nowhere near worth the best part of £400 per round.

Give newbies a break

As a fairly new golfer I find attitudes like "Simon's" (Today's Golfer, issue 342) fairly off putting and it's no wonder golf suffers from a lack of new players.

I recently got my competitive handicap and I'm desperate to play in the monthly comps, but I'm put off by the feeling that if I do well, a person with a low handicap will begrudge me – not exactly a nice feeling to have for a sport that's supposed to be fun.

I've found golf a tough nut to crack – not just learning how to hit the ball straight, but the rules and etiquette as well.

I've tried my best to make sure I know what's what, but there is a lot to take in and it takes time. I've missed things before and got slammed for it. Don't get me wrong, there are plenty of understanding people who I've spoken to, but it's always the negatives that stick.

PAUL JONES, SOMERSET

Offensive view

I am not surprised "Simon" wished to be anonymous (Today's Golfer, issue 342). I totally resent his slanderous assertion that all high handicappers are "playing the game".

I take great offence at this as a 20-handicapper whose aim in golf is to lower my handicap within the resources and time I have available. He is obviously lucky to be able to play and practise enough to get down to two, which is a great achievement.

The last thing us high handicappers need is elitist low handicappers assuming we are all cheating to get a higher handicap.

Yes there are golfers that "play the game" (I have known a few) but I'd suggest that these are the minority.

I also don't believe that all low



handicappers hold Simon's offensive views. I suggest that Anonymous Simon issues an apology forthwith.

STEVE PEARY, BOLTON

No jeans, please

I agree with Adam Flynn (Today's Golfer, issue 343) about dumbing down the game to make it easier.

However, I do disagree with his comments about changing dress code rules, and allowing T-shirts and jeans on to the golf course. This must never be allowed to happen. There cannot be anything worse than scruffy clothes on the course. Dress etiquette is the same in my opinion as the rules of golf.

DAVID NICHOL, EMAIL

If the shoe fits

David Miller's letter (Today's Golfer, issue 342) about golf shoes not lasting rings so true. But has he ever wondered why?

Manufacturers want you to buy a new pair of golf shoes every two years so it's not in their interests to make them last forever. I am middle aged and have spent a fortune on golf shoes over the years.

I now have three pairs which I use – one pair for dry but soft conditions, one pair of moulded spikes for summer and one pair for wet conditions. One tip I would give any golfer is don't wear good shoes in wet conditions.

I purchased a pair of £30 waterproof shoes three years ago and they are brilliant. I never get wet feet and I can walk through puddles without fear. Will they last? Well after three years and an occasional clean they are like new and I reckon I have another three years left in them at least, bar a change of spikes.

KEITH STEELE, KENT

Sock solution

With regard to Dave Miller's complaint about waterproof golf shoes (Today's Golfer, issue 342),



Henrik Stenson feels the heat in South Africa. Would shorts help?

there is one big difference – golfers habitually have to wade through long wet grass searching for a golf ball. A better solution is to wear waterproof socks. I've been using Sealskinz for over 15 years. It doesn't matter how wet the shoes get inside my feet are always dry. They come in three different thicknesses. I never buy waterproof golf shoes.

STEPHEN RACTLIFFE, SHROPSHIRE

Let pros wear shorts

I watched the Nedbank Challenge in South Africa, where on the Saturday it was reported to be 42°C. It was evident that some of the players were struggling in this heat, and it was made worse by the current rules of every professional men's golf tour that long trousers must be worn.

The professional tours need to ask what they believe the impact of allowing players to wear shorts would be. Would TV coverage, sponsorship or spectator numbers reduce? No they wouldn't.

MARTIN BERRY, EMAIL

Lawrence Stallard

The current members should all leave en-mass and leave the club with zero members and zero income.

Derek Guilfoyle

They want the club to fail so he can close the course and develop all the land as luxury real estate.

Shaun Casey

100k for a course that isn't that special?

Brian Taylor

Ernie Els made a mess of it so I would leave. Those who pay daft cash like that deserve to be stifled.

J Barnes

I didn't even pay £100,000 for my house! But it's all relative – if you've got that kind of cash to spare on golf, it's probably not too much at all.

Walter Gregory

I used to be a member, but found the average round was costing about £40 because I didn't play enough. Now I play when I can and search for good deals – most clubs are happy for the business.

Leave Tiger alone!

All the speculation about Tiger's future as he turned 40 annoyed me. I can understand why he's never really got on with the media – what a lot of pompous tosh!

The irony is that half the writers pontificating on Tiger's game probably play off about 20!

The guy did more to grow the game than anyone in history. He's bagged 14 Majors, 70-odd PGA Tour wins. I think that gives him the right to a bit more respect. Let's stop comparing him to Nicklaus, or questioning whether he'll win again. Let's just remember what he's achieved so far.

ANDY HOOD, LANCs

Plug a gap in the rules

The review and update of the Rules of Golf by the R&A and USGA has come and gone yet one of the most misunderstood rules that creates confusion and debate on the course remains untouched – namely how to proceed when faced with a ball embedded off the fairway.

The default position under Rule 25-2 Embedded Ball still provides no automatic relief for a ball embedded outside of a 'closely mown area through the green' i.e. anywhere not on a fairway, the tee or green of the hole in play or in a hazard.

Instead, Rule 25-2 Note 3 permits every club Committee to adopt a



ON THE GO

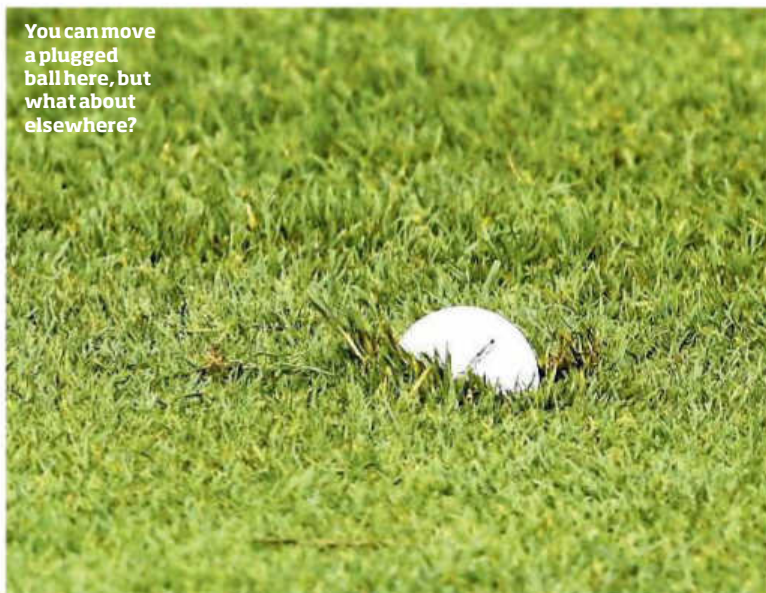
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You can move a plugged ball here, but what about elsewhere?



local rule, but this approach promotes inconsistency of procedure from course to course and at different times of the year, depending upon whether Committees adopt temporary or permanent Local Rules.

Unfortunately, many club golfers and casual golfers playing in competitions, society days or company golf days are not familiar with Rule 25 and its nuances.

Surely it would be easier for everyone if the Embedded Ball Rule were simplified by firstly removing the 'closely mown' reference and secondly prescribing a lift, clean and drop relief option in all circumstances and ground conditions when a ball is embedded in its own pitch mark 'through the green'?

In a period where we are losing players to the game and are concerned about factors causing slow play, we need to reassess confusing rules such as Rule 25 with its complex cross references and make them easier to understand and fairer in their application.

CHARLES MORDAUNT, EMAIL

You get what you pay for

Last autumn I took the advice from TG and invested in a set of Galvin Green waterproofs. They weren't cheap, and a few guys muttered things about buying a suit from Sports Direct for £30. But the recent weather has justified my decision! Cheap gear can be a false economy.

DAVID JONES, EMAIL

Bridgestone blow

It was sad and worrying to read on your website that Bridgestone Golf is pulling out of the UK from February. What does it say about the state of the game here when a company the size of Bridgestone can't make the UK work for them? I hope brands don't follow them.

BARRY WRIGHT, EMAIL

Playing in the rain

Even though the weather has been terrible recently, we've still loved to play. Thanks to a trolley with a brolly holder, a waterproof bag, modern shoes and clothing, it's been fine. We're lucky – only 20 years ago it was very different!

KEN BRADLEY, EMAIL

GET IN TOUCH

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Top tweets



FROM THEM...

Jordan Spieth @JordanSpieth
Would rather this year not end...

Ian Poulter @IanJamesPoulter
I had fun choosing all the specs for this @Ferrari 458 Speciale Aperta. True Italian theme.



Tiger Woods @TigerWoods
Thanks everyone for the wonderful birthday wishes. 40 is cool.

Zach Johnson @ZachJohnsonPGA
Aloha from Maui! Excited to kickoff the 2016 season with @pxg and the other #PXGtroops!



Brooks Koepka @BKoepka
It's official ... happy to join @nikegolf! #TeamNike #EnjoyTheChase

Jason Day @JDayGolf
So glad the @adidasGolf tour360 is back. The Boa version is definitely going in play this year! #TOUR360BOOST



Sergio Garcia @TheSergioGarcia
My best wishes to a legend like #ZinedineZidane as @realmadrid manager tough job but I hope it goes well because he deserves it!



Webb Simpson @webbsimpson1
I don't think the architects of our house envisioned the back porch as a covered hitting bay, but it's working well.

Tony Johnstone @TonyJohnstone56
January 1st interesting w/anchoring ban. A few will look like they're 'holding the live cable'.

Bubba Watson @bubbawatson
Little whale watching!!! #UrWelcome



Rory McIlroy @McIlroyRory
Jose, I take it all back.... We'd welcome you with open arms at Man Utd!!!

Luke Donald @LukeDonald
Got to test the brand new Trackman 4 today. Pretty impressive piece of equipment. An expensive toy but it sure was fun to play with #technology

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Andrew Cotter

Donald Trump is doing golf no favours with his recent pronouncements

As we sit here, currently racing through the alphabet of winter storm names, you probably just want some sort of escape from the troubles of the world. An oasis of calm and light-hearted golfing chat. And yet here I am, about to ruin things by mentioning Donald Trump. This simple and dignified businessman turned political aspirant, quietly going about his work – letting his deeds speak for him.

But we should talk about The Don. Because, on whichever side of the fence you sit – whether you find his views deeply annoying or massively offensive – he is a rather influential figure in the game now, mostly through his habit of purchasing golf clubs in his real-life game of Monopoly.

His most high-profile acquisition is, of course, Turnberry – or Trump Turnberry as we must call it, with his insistence on his name being added to every single thing he possesses. I imagine his home life is something similar with a Trump sofa and Trump fridge. Possibly a Trump International coal scuttle. And this was the image of Donald Trump we once had – a slightly comical, egotistical figure. We would consider him – if he came into our thinking at all – as a rather arrogant blowhard. Noisy and brash, but largely harmless and on the periphery of our world.

Sadly, this is no more the case. He is no longer fringe theatre but centre stage, and in his race for the Republican candidacy he chooses to use the platform and clear influence he wields to fire off inflammatory rhetoric and divide the world still further when we all need calm and measured tones. But in golfing terms, let us first of all hear the case for the defence of Trump.

He does clearly love the sport and has been prepared to put part of his vast funds into several courses on both sides of the Atlantic and beyond. What he, in conjunction with architect Martin Ebert, is doing to the Ailsa course at Turnberry is remarkable. The transformation is already nearing completion and will be ready to sample in June. Having seen it, I can say that a fine course has become something to take the breath away. He has done what many people wanted to do, but lacked the financial muscle and sheer drive to carry out – giving Turnberry the layout to match its stunning location. I also have to declare that I provided the voiceover for the video explaining the redevelopment of the Ailsa course. This was done in more innocent days when Trump's biggest argument seemed to be with Alex Salmond over

wind turbines and we saw him only as a man who occasionally shouted stuff on Twitter and owned New York. I was also happy to put my voice to the video because, as an Ayrshireman, I have a real affection for Turnberry and was thrilled with the changes.

There is also slightly more to Trump than the pantomime villain we see in our daily headlines.

He has, according to every member of staff I have spoken to at the club and the hotel, been nothing but a pleasure to deal with – treating them well and being a generous employer. The trouble is that it is impossible to detach Trump the benevolent golf course owner with Trump the incendiary and divisive figure. He cannot be a stupid man to have constructed a vast business empire, but his every utterance recently suggests otherwise.

Does it really matter though – if he puts up the money? Well, yes. He believes that he is polishing this jewel in the crown of Scottish and British golf, but doesn't realise that with his rantings he tarnishes it. He also, sadly, confirms the prejudices that many people have about golf – that it is for the elite, for big business, for a vain and pompous wealthy. Nonsense, of course, but Trump doesn't help.

And that is the predicament created by the man. Those who work at Turnberry must shudder when he opens his mouth on the campaign hustings, for their livelihoods depend on the success of the place. Yet, at the same time, his investment is significant. His money is very welcome, even if his name is not.

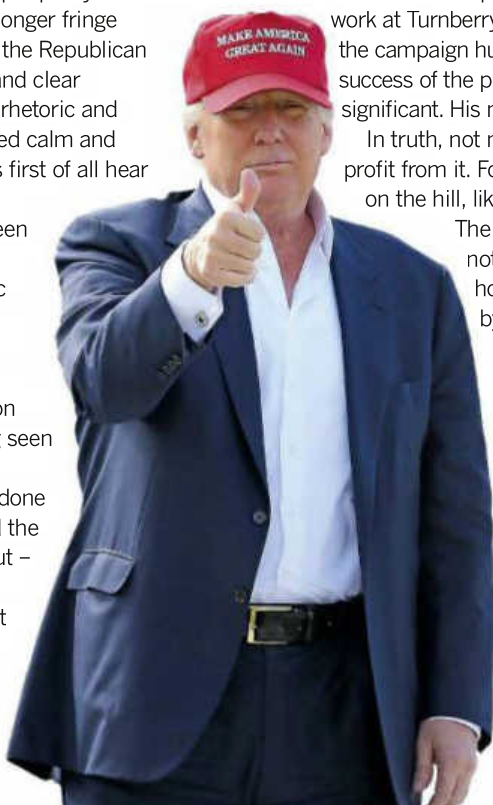
In truth, not many owners of Turnberry has ever turned a profit from it. For the winter months it sits rather redundantly on the hill, like the hotel in *The Shining*.

The supposition is that the reward Trump seeks is not financial, but instead owning a course which hosts The Open. A status, however, which hangs by a thread.

The R&A has long had misgivings about Turnberry as a venue for logistical reasons – neither travel nor accommodation are easy, spectator numbers are low. And with every comment Trump makes they have another excuse to avoid taking the Claret Jug back there. Many different owners have come and gone over the years. If the Open doesn't return, Donald Trump may well pack up his helicopter, take his name off the gates and move on.

You simply hope that the magical place that Turnberry is and the good people who work there will remain and thrive long after Storm Donald has blown through.

'He confirms the prejudices that many people have about golf'



Part of the BBC commentary team, **Andrew Cotter** grew up tackling Ayrshire's links and plays off 3. Follow him on Twitter (@MrAndrewCotter)



Denis Pugh

Build a support team like a tour pro and start playing like one...

Have you ever noticed how almost every victory speech on tour comprises a long list of 'thank yous' as the event winner acknowledges the vital support from their team?

You may even have thought how great it would be to have your own support staff on hand to help your game. Well, now you can.

You're probably thinking that budget is going to be an issue, but if you have promised yourself a new driver in the spring, let me show you how that money could be better spent now, on a team that will revolutionise your game in time for the start of the new golf season. Here are the key components to your team...

Swing coach

Top tour pros have a swing coach at their beck and call, which naturally racks up a sizable monthly bill, but you can get what you need for around £100. Book three lessons with a PGA pro and work hard on whatever he suggests. That means two evenings a week at the range, working on the changes and drills he gives you. Don't worry too much about the shots you hit while you're working on your swing, and don't give up if improvement isn't immediate. You've spent countless hours ingraining your old swing; don't expect to groove a new one within 20 minutes.

You should complement the range sessions with two short sessions a week at home, making full swings and pausing every five swings to consider your feel for the motion, concentrating on the points your coach has suggested and how it is different to your old swing. Start off doing five sets of five swings, and slowly build up to 20 sets of five swings. It takes strength and concentration, but it will be worth it when you make a new, better swing, that feels completely natural, rather than forced.

Fitness coach

Don't worry, you don't need to hammer the weights six times a week like some tour pros. Book a session with a personal trainer and ask him to put together a programme of

stretches for home. It should be a simple routine that might only take you 10 minutes, but that you can do every day. I know you will miss the odd day here and there, but doing this regularly will have a dramatic impact on your strength and flexibility, enabling you to hit the ball further without trying to hit it harder.

Mental coach

You can get the wisdom of probably the world's best sports psychologist, Dr Bob Rotella, for less than a tenner. He's worked with countless sports stars, and coached golfers including Padraig Harrington, Davis Love III, Nick Price, Darren Clarke and Paul Azinger to 24 Major championships. Most golfers think their problems are purely with their swing or equipment, when in reality they drop shots every time they play by mistakes made in the head. Pick up one of Rotella's books and put what he says into practice. Improve your thinking and you will improve your scores – I guarantee it.

'In reality most golfers drop shots every round due to mental mistakes'

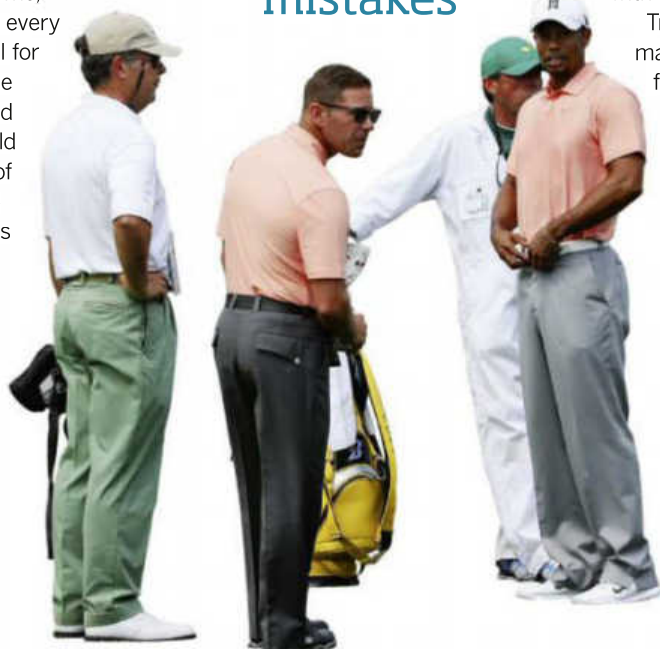
Short game coach

Unless you have serious issues, most of you can be your own putting coach. It's a much simpler action than the full swing, so you shouldn't need a trained expert with multiple cameras to pinpoint and explain your issues. You can improve on the green with discipline and practice.

Treat yourself to a purpose-built putting mat and concentrate on three to five-foot putts. Work in batches of five putts, changing your thoughts to a different part of your technique with each new batch. At times, focus solely on technique, and don't worry about whether the putt goes in. At other times, do a performance test and focus on holing five out of five. It sounds simple, but pressure really builds with each holed putt!

It's a team game

All of the above can be achieved for a very modest outlay. Do it all, give maximum effort on your own part, and you will be a better golfer by April. You can thank me (and the rest of your 'team') when you win the first competition of the year!



Denis Pugh is a Sky Sports pundit, PGA Master Professional and coach to Ross Fisher and Francesco Molinari. Follow him on Twitter (@DPugh54)

Fault Fixer

SAVING YOU SHOTS
EVERY TIME YOU PLAY

EDITED BY DUNCAN LENNARD

Putting lifeline

The grip that'll help you
hole more putts **Page 32**

Thwart the shank

A simple drill to kill this
horror shot **Page 33**

Deal with dog-legs

Four strategies for
bendy holes **Page 24**

Sand saver

Learn how to adjust the
face to the lie **Page 28**

Rebuild your rhythm

Rediscover your flow mid-
round, and hit longer drives



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1 Which side of the green is the pin cut?

Wherever possible, make the effort to find which part of the green the flag is on. On sharp dog-legs right, a flag on the right of the green makes a virtue of hitting a longer tee shot as it gives you a better line for your approach; if the flag is on the left, a shorter shot can often give a better angle to attack the pin. Of course, reverse this for sharp dog-legs to the left.

2 Prioritise length as much as line

On many long holes we can just blast away with the driver, focusing only on direction and giving little thought to hitting the ball a specific distance. On shorter dog-legs the fairway often runs out, taking this option away from you. So instead, use your yardage chart or distance measuring device to pick a safe distance for your tee shot – then choose the appropriate club.

STRATEGY

Deal with dog-legs

Four ways to stop these holes driving you round the bend

Fault: Careless dropped shots on dog-legs through poor planning.

Fix: Employ a smarter tee box strategy that keeps the ball in play.

Here we have a shortish, tight dog-leg par 4. Most courses have at least one hole like this. On the card they can

look like birdie opportunities – but they set a challenge through their angles rather than through their length, and because of this they demand more brain than brawn. Here are four pointers to help you play a smarter game on this type of hole.

4 How to make best use of the tee width

When there are trees about, it's possible to get your approach blocked out on dog-legs. Avoid that by moving to the side of the tee that matches the dog-leg angle – in this case the right – and creating a hitting angle that sends the ball away from the timber. In hitting towards the wider, more open side of the fairway, you give yourself a better chance of a clear approach.

3 Tee shot positioning: be precise

The more accurately you can pick a spot for your tee shot to end, the better your chances of hitting it. So really narrow in your target zone. Select a position that offers a flat lie and the best angle in to the flag. Visualise a flag at that spot, and strike your tee shot with the precision focus you'd give to your approach. Even if you don't give it your best shot, you'll still be in good shape.

TG TOP 50

GARETH BENSON
GARETH BENSON GOLF ACADEMY

Founder of the
Gareth Benson
Golf Academy,
Manchester.
garethbenson
golf.co.uk



1



Shaft against back

Stand upright with your feet stance-width apart. Take a mid iron and hold it against your back, as shown. Make sure it's in contact with the back of your head, your back between the shoulder blades, and the top of your rear.

2



Bend forward

Smoothly bend forward from the hips, keeping those three contact points between club and back intact. Bend until you feel the backs of your calf muscles becoming tight. You should feel your weight moving into your toes.

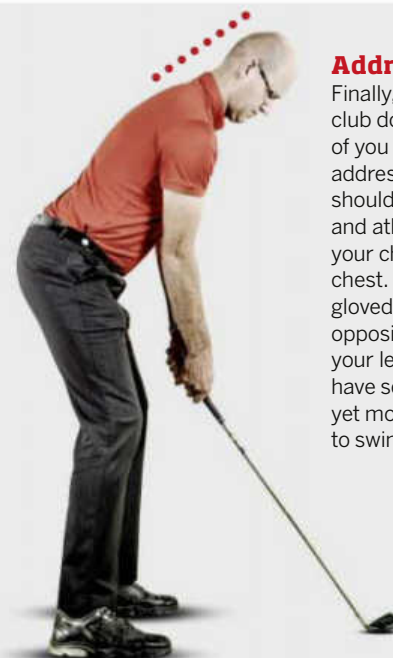
3



Flex your knees

Keeping the club in place push your knees forward, out of their sockets, to create some knee flex. Don't overdo this, there should be no 'bounce' in the knees. But feel the tension easing out of your legs, and your weight moving more under the centre of both feet.

4



Address the ball

Finally, bring the club down in front of you and take your address position. You should feel balanced and athletic, with your chin off your chest. Feel your gloved hand is opposite the inside of your lead thigh. You have set up a robust yet mobile structure to swing through.

Build a stable swing base

Four steps to a posture that promotes better balance and longer shots

TG TOP 50
MARK MCGEEHAN
MAGNOLIA PARK GOLF CLUB



Mark uses the 3dGEARS system. For more details see mcgeehangolf.com

Fault: Poor balance, inconsistent path, powerless shots

Fix: Improve your set-up posture to create better plane. A good address position affords athletic movement within a

stable structure. When you set up well, you prime your body to make a full rotation in balance. Key to this is creating pelvic tilt, bending from the hips to allow an extended spine. When you do

this, you open the gate to rotation and power; a rounded, buckled spine shuts it. This is one of the key benefits of good posture – and here's a simple four-stage drill to achieve it.

IRONS

Boxing clever

How a cardboard box can straighten out your swing

Fault: Hooks, slices and loss of power

Fix: Use a cardboard box to improve your swing plane and path. If you don't have an old club cardboard box, ask your pro for one. They can make a truly effective practice aid – especially for anyone who habitually swings across the ball at impact. Here's how to put that box to great use.

3. Swing back

Retain that box/shaft gap and you'll start the swing on line, and with good width.

2. Make a gap

Set up to the ball, ensuring there's a finger's width between the club shaft and the box.

1. Aim the box

Place it parallel to the ball-target line, inside the golf ball. Position the ball opposite its centre.



Impact pathfinder

The box also acts as a guide for the club's path through impact. A neutral attack sees the shaft just miss the box on its journey down and through.

Hooks and slices crop up when your swing creates a mismatched face-to-path relationship.

In neutralising the path, this drill builds the foundations for a tidier move through impact.

TG TOP 50

GARETH JOHNSTON
CALCOT PARK, READING

PGA
Professional
and Director
of Golf at
Calcot Park in
Berkshire.



PUTTING VIDEO TIPS
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BUNKERS

Match the face to the lie

Adjust the club to promote success from any bunker lie

Fault: Poor contact from various sand lies

Fix: Alter face aim to add or reduce bounce. Here is a simple rule to adopt in bunkers; the more the ball is nestled, the more you need to close the clubface.

This is because the sole of your sand wedge works in different ways, depending on how the face is angled. Once you know how the face orientation affects the sand strike, you can adjust it to suit the lie you've been given – and give yourself your best chance of a successful shot. Here's what to do in three common lies.

Use the back of the sole

Impacting the sand with the back edge works on clean lies, as it helps you control the amount of sand taken.

Clean lie: open the face

As the face opens, the sole's back edge drops. This curved edge is a skimmer, stopping the head ploughing down.



Rake mark lie: square the face

The more you close the face, the more the front edge of the sole takes effect. The sharper front edge is a digger, helping the clubhead cut down through the sand. That's helpful when the bottom of the ball is below the sand's surface.



Plugged lie: close the face

The lower the bottom of the ball is in the sand, the more you need to increase that digging effect. So for plugged lies, actually toe the face in to make that leading edge even sharper. Just be sure to aim right to allow for the face aim, and expect the ball to run.

TG TOP 50

ADRIAN FRYER
FELLOW OF THE PGA



Based at True Fit Golf Centre, Warrington. See more at adrianfryergolf.com

TECHNIQUE

Find rhythm mid-round

Why your 7-iron is a key weapon in the battle to keep your tempo

Fault: Losing your rhythm during the round, causing inconsistent shots

Fix: Use your 7-iron for practice swings. Swinging with rhythm is essential for good golf. Good rhythm helps you find the right sequencing and timing for your swing, helping you hit the ball with power and accuracy. However, during a round of golf

there are all kinds of things that compromise good rhythm. Pressure, bad weather, fatigue, or having to hit your least-favourite club can all have a negative effect. If you feel your swing losing its flow, here is a simple way to remind yourself what good rhythm feels like, and fire that good swing pace back into your action.

7-iron rehearsal

Whatever club you are about to use, make two practice swings with your 7-iron. It will give you a timely reminder of the pace and aggression with which you should be swinging the golf club.

Your best rhythm

The 7-iron is most golfers' favourite club. It's not a distance club, so we don't feel we have to force it. But it's also long enough to help us feel a full swing. We use our best rhythm when we swing a 7-iron.



Focus on repeating the finishing position

This drill works especially well with the driver, where we can easily lose rhythm by trying to hit the ball too hard. In particular, register that comfortable finishing position you created with the 7-iron and aim to repeat it with your driver. That will keep your swing speed in check, and your rhythm intact.

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TG TOP 50

DUNCAN WOOLGER
 WORLD OF GOLF, NEW MALDEN

An Advanced
 PGA Member
 and Master
 Professional
 at World of
 Golf, Surrey.



What's your golf story?

The narratives we create around the game can help or hinder our performance

So, you're playing golf this morning. You get up, look outside; it's rainy, windy, cold. Yes, it's going to be a battle today – slow, bumpy greens, good shots blown off-course, miserable waits on the tees; you never play well in the rain...

Ok, hopefully you're a bit more upbeat than that. But the above is an example of the type of narrative to which all golfers are susceptible. In other words, we create stories around the situations we're in – and those stories can work for you, or against you.

'What the thinker thinks, the prover proves' is a well-known phrase. It means that if you think you're going to struggle today, your brain will look for ways to prove it, and ultimately bring it about. Wind in your face on the first tee, your first three-putt... if your weather story is negative, your brain will use these to confirm it. Rapidly, you put yourself in a truly ineffective state of mind that makes a decent return almost impossible.

The good news is that we can use stories to create a far more resourceful and productive state. Here are three common scenarios where you might want to change your narrative.

1 Bad weather

As we've discussed, a common reaction is to find bad-weather golf unappealing, hard, a chore. A better response would be to see it as a challenge to be met, or of letting it fuel your competitive side; take a better attitude to the conditions than the rest of the field, as Jordan Spieth (right) does, and you give yourself an advantage over them.

'See bad weather as a chance to fuel your competitive side'

Another great response is to adjust your expectations for the day. If you play off 12, give yourself 15 shots. Turn a long par 4 into the wind into a par 5 and the quest to make four becomes far more appealing. You can also create a strategy for the day, from the outerwear and extra gloves you pack to the knockdown shots you'll need.

2 Playing against a better player

Golfers suffer here by creating stories borrowed from other sports. In tennis, cricket and football, a better opponent can have a direct effect on your performance. So the narrative we tend to create is that, because your opponent is playing a superior game, yours is diminished in comparison. In devaluing your own game, you pretty much guarantee a defeat.

A much more fruitful response would be to remind yourself that, in golf, the better player can only influence you to the degree you are focused on him. So instead, appreciate the handicap system and tell yourself that, in doing your own thing, you can become a nuisance to any good player. When you focus on yourself, use your shots, and match his good play with halves and wins, your chances of winning shoot up.

3 Slow play

The story we tend to create around slow play is that it's unnecessary and irritating, that it makes it impossible to get any kind of rhythm going and generally spoils the round.

If you reach the course with these types of thoughts in mind, you are putting your attention on something out of your control, and you'll start your round looking for signs that prove your preconceptions. Both of those will harm your focus and performance.

Nobody expects you to like slow play, but it's quite possible to have a stance about the issue without allowing it to affect your play on a day-to-day basis. You can develop responses that limit its negative effect.

Take Ryder Cup player Stephen Gallacher. He recently

revealed he recognised slow play was part of his job, and that rather than getting irritated about it, he went to see someone about

adjusting his preshot routine for slow days.

Consider also that, if you ask most people why they play golf, they will talk about being outdoors, the companionship, the social side. They are still available to you on slow days, yet people typically shut them down, instead staring silently at the group ahead.

If you don't want slow play to affect your score, find a story that shifts your focus away from it and on to your game... and leave the inquest till the 19th.



TG TOP 50

KARL MORRIS
WWW.THEMINDFACTOR.COM



Karl has worked with Major winners including McDowell and Oosthuizen.

TECHNIQUE

Control the face

Put your alignment canes to better use

Fault: Wayward shots caused by lack of clubface control

Fix: Build awareness of where the face is aiming throughout the swing. Ever wondered how it is that you can spend ages getting your aim perfectly square, and yet still slice the ball out of bounds? It's because the golf ball neither knows nor cares where your feet are pointing. It cares only about what the face is telling it to do – and

with that slice, a wide open face was telling it to cut. Thanks to alignment canes, many club golfers know where their feet are aiming; but when it comes to the clubface they have little idea. For me, this is the wrong way round – and this is why I recommend a different use of alignment canes, one that heightens your awareness of the face's position and helps you build face control. Here's how it works.

1. Use 3 canes

Put them 20 yards in front of you. Put a fourth on the turf on the path from the ball to the centre cane. Use any club.

2. Hit each cane

Simply hit the left, right, then centre cane from the same set-up. Alter the ball's path through the clubface only.



Take it to the course

On practice rounds, find shots where you have to stand open or closed, yet hit the ball straight – like around the edge of a bunker. The ball only listens to the face, and building this kind of face control will keep your shots much straighter than 'perfect' alignment.

3. Build awareness

The more you do this drill, the more you will develop a feel for how much the toe of the clubface needs to lead the heel at impact for the left cane, and vice versa for the right cane.

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KENDAL MCWADE
BONNYTON GC, GLASGOW

An England
Golf Coach and
the founder
of Instinctive
Golf Coaching.



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PUTTING

Lifeline for your game

The lower-hand grip tip that will help you hole more putts

Fault: Missed short putts

Fix: Align your lower-hand grip with the clubface

Let your right or trail arm hang in front of you, palm outstretched, and gently swing it back and forth, as per the putting stroke. Feel how the palm faces the target back and through. To send the ball off on-line consistently, it's vital your hold of the putter aligns the aim of your palm with the aim of the putterface.

If your hands are twisted onto the putter's grip, the stroke they produce will tend to distort the path of the putter, and therefore the aim of its face.

To find this 'aligned' hold, a great reference is the lifeline in the lower hand. Get this right first and your upper hand molds around it, finding the right position too. Here's how it works.

Line of the grip

You'll also notice this sees the putter run almost vertically down through the hand; that's fine, as it aligns the grip with your forearms, promoting consistency and accuracy.

TG TOP 50

JAMES WHITAKER
JWHITAKER GOLF, LEEDS



PGA pro with bases at Moor Allerton and Howley Hall golf clubs, West Yorkshire.

An effective grip

Square the blade to a close target then place your lower-hand palm against the grip's side. Snugly work the grip into the palm's lifeline. The palm's orientation now matches the putterface.



Now add the top hand

Close your fingers round the grip then add the top hand. It uses the lower hand as a reference for its placement, its palm facing directly away from the target line. Both palms are now married to the putterface, and feel like they're one and the same through the stroke to help you hole out.

MORE TIPS ONLINE
www.todaysgolfer.co.uk/tips

IRONS

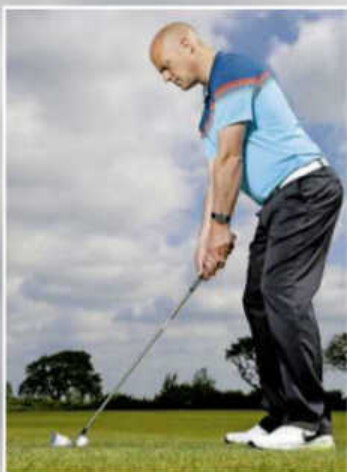
A quick drill to kill the shank

See double to find the sweetspot

Fault: Iron shots coming out of the club's socket
Fix: Retrain your swing to move impact closer to you
 There are plenty of opinions on what causes the dreaded shank, but there is one fact; when you hit one, the club is further away from you at impact than it was at address. So rather than deal with complicated and unnecessary technique, let's focus on the simple truth that if you can reverse the loop that takes the club further from you, you'll go a long way to ridding yourself of one of golf's most hated and feared shots. Here's a drill to help you.

Reversing the loop

When you shank, your swing creates a loop that throws your downswing arc further away from you than the backswing arc. By hitting the inner ball you are directly attacking and reversing the loop.



1. Set up two balls

Choose the club you tend to shank with. Take your regular set-up, but place a second ball inside the first, opposite the hosel of the club, as shown. Address the outside ball, but look at the inside ball.

2. Inside track

Swing back normally, but strike the inner ball. Hit 10 balls using this drill – then place a single ball down and hit it as normal. With your swing retrained, and the loop turned, you will find the centre of the club.



TG TOP 50

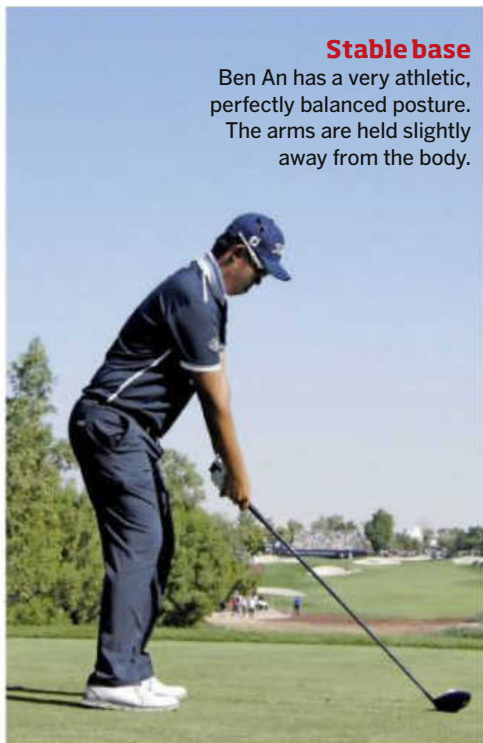
KEVIN FLYNN
 TOURNERBURY GC, HANTS

Fellow of the
 PGA and a
 European
 Golf
 Development
 Consultant.



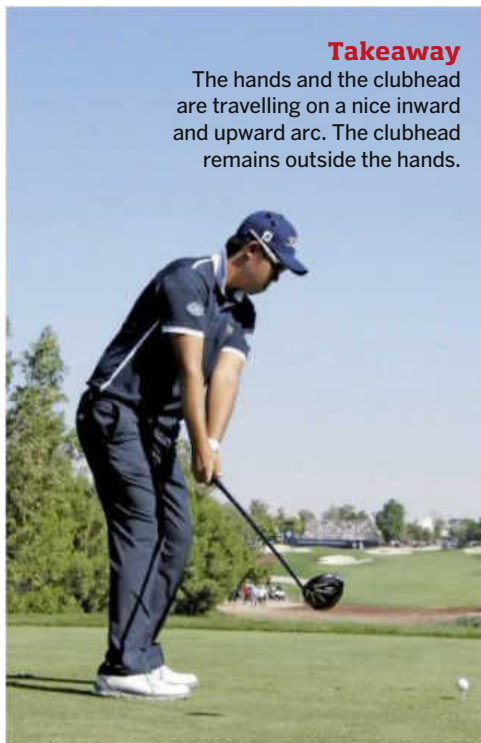
Stable base

Ben An has a very athletic, perfectly balanced posture. The arms are held slightly away from the body.



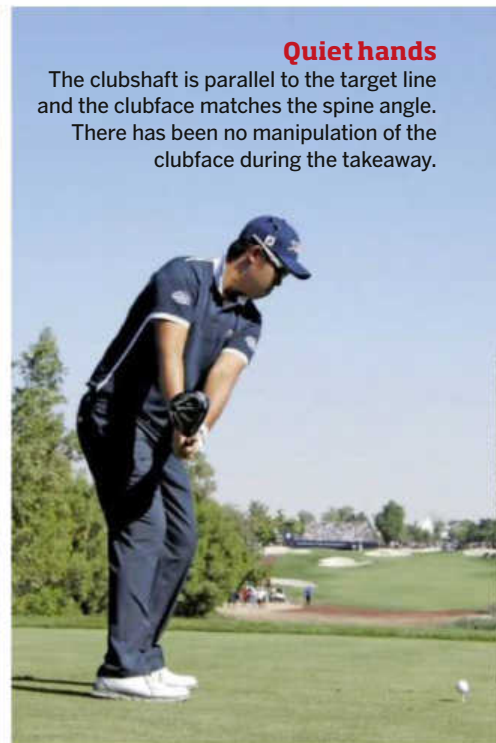
Takeaway

The hands and the clubhead are travelling on a nice inward and upward arc. The clubhead remains outside the hands.



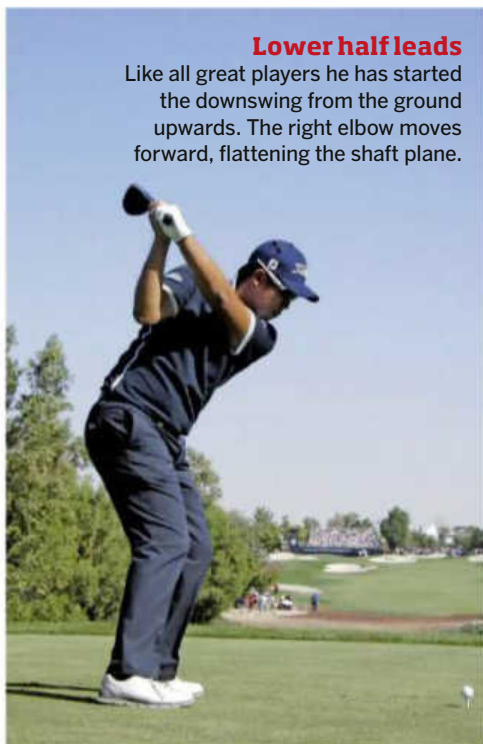
Quiet hands

The clubshaft is parallel to the target line and the clubface matches the spine angle. There has been no manipulation of the clubface during the takeaway.



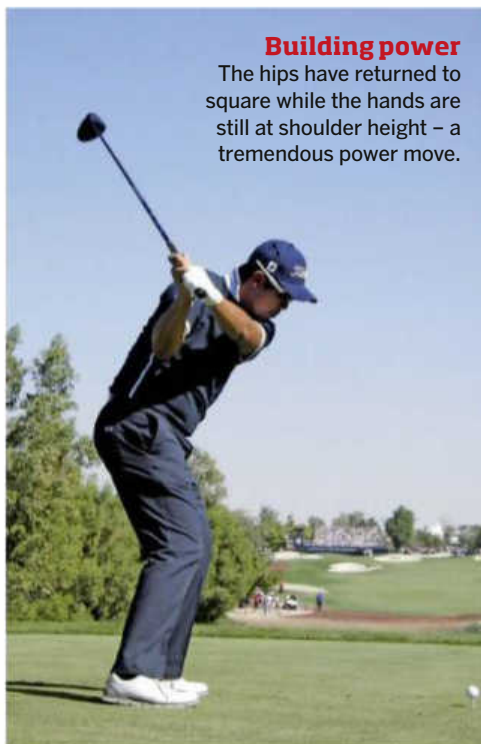
Lower half leads

Like all great players he has started the downswing from the ground upwards. The right elbow moves forward, flattening the shaft plane.



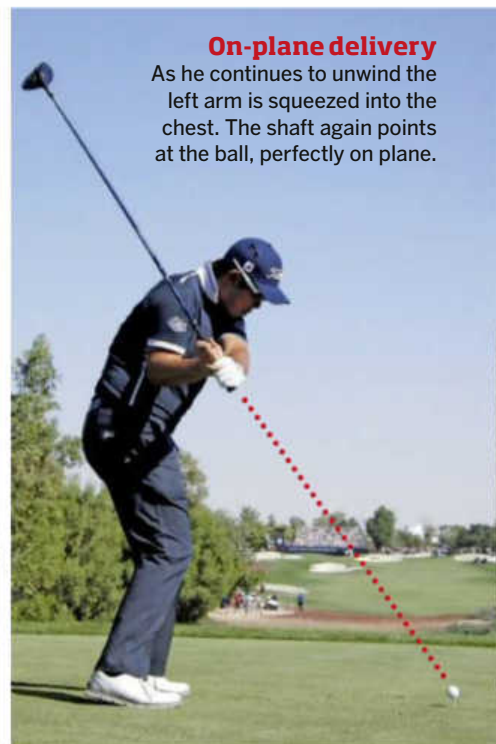
Building power

The hips have returned to square while the hands are still at shoulder height – a tremendous power move.



On-plane delivery

As he continues to unwind the left arm is squeezed into the chest. The shaft again points at the ball, perfectly on plane.



SWING SEQUENCE

How Ben An turns on the power

TG TOP 50
ADRIAN BISHOP
STOCKWOOD VALE, BRISTOL



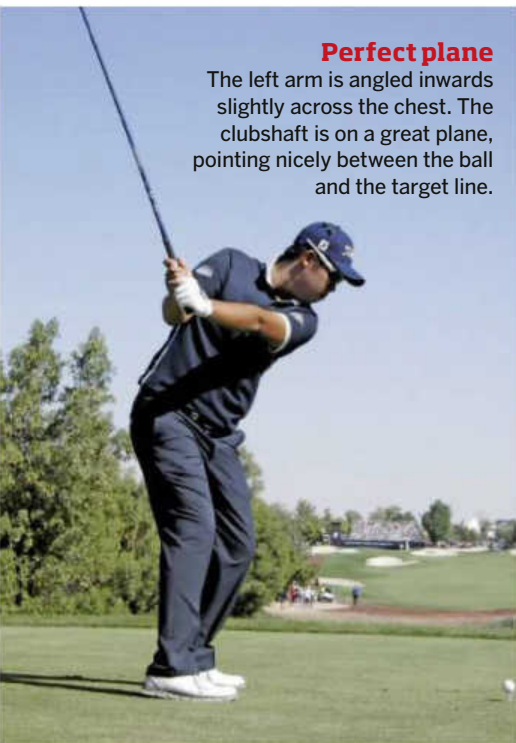
PGA National coaching tutor based at the Adrian Bishop Academy.

South Korea's An Byeong-hun qualified for the 2015 European Tour thanks to a high-placed finish on the 2014 Challenge Tour. Twelve months later, his European Tour ranking had risen from 161st to 7th, he had won the Tour's flagship BMW PGA event, and just shy of £2m. No

wonder the impressive 24-year-old was made Sir Henry Cotton Rookie of the Year. A series of impressive top-10 finishes towards the end of the year has helped Ben An lift his world ranking to 28th – a position destined to rise, thanks to a golf swing that routinely drives the ball well over 300 yards.

Perfect plane

The left arm is angled inwards slightly across the chest. The clubshaft is on a great plane, pointing nicely between the ball and the target line.



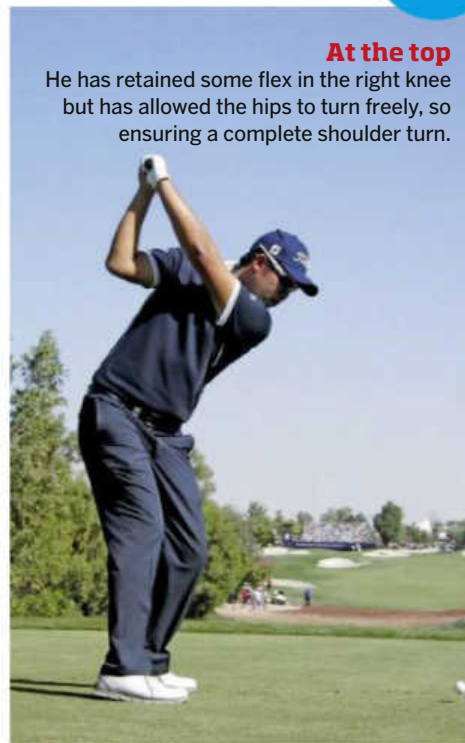
Face matches forearm

As the club nears the top of the backswing the clubface is perfectly lined with the back of the left forearm.



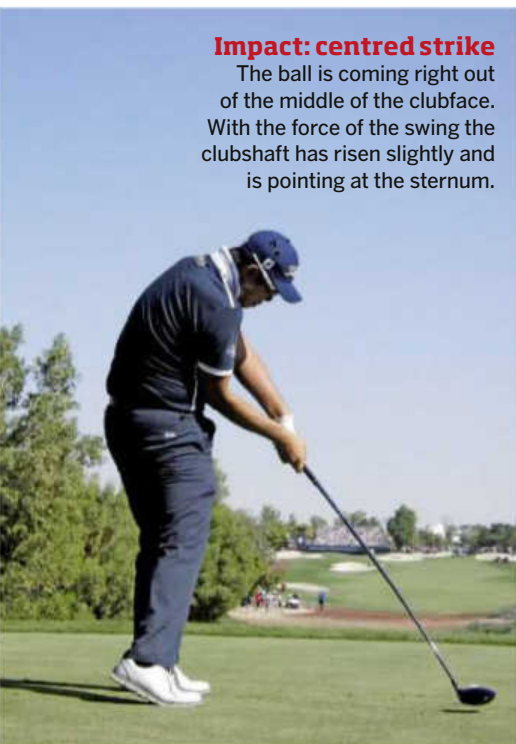
At the top

He has retained some flex in the right knee but has allowed the hips to turn freely, so ensuring a complete shoulder turn.



Impact: centred strike

The ball is coming right out of the middle of the clubface. With the force of the swing the clubshaft has risen slightly and is pointing at the sternum.



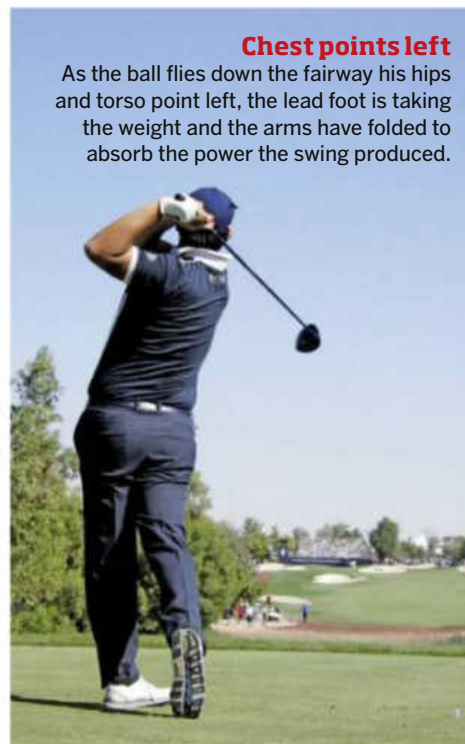
Strong extension

As a result of his use of the ground to develop his power, both legs are pulled straight and the free-swinging motion of the club sees both arms fully extended.



Chest points left

As the ball flies down the fairway his hips and torso point left, the lead foot is taking the weight and the arms have folded to absorb the power the swing produced.



1 Arms and body move together

Ben's takeaway is synchronised, with little independent forearm rotation. To find this, work on the butt of the club pointing at your navel while keeping the club in front of the hands for the first 2ft of your backswing.

2 Swing steep to shallow

Like many good players Ben swings back on a slight upright plane, which allows it to shallow on the way down. If you are guilty of coming over the top and prone to slicing, copy his example.

3 Lower body starts down

Ben develops power by starting the downswing from the ground up. To feel this, start your swing with your lead foot back against the trail foot – then start down with a strong lead foot stride forwards the target.

BEN AN'S 2015 STATS

- 70.09** Stroke average (9th on the European Tour)
- 60.19%** Driving accuracy (104th)
- 300.43** Driving distance in yards (24th)
- 72.43%** Greens in regulation (30th)
- 29.21** Putts per round (35th)
- 28th** Official World ranking (Mid December)

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Iconic 2015
Spieth had
one of the
modern era's
great years.

EAT. SLEEP. WIN. RESPECT. **REPEAT.**

Jordan Spieth's mantra is simple, five simple words by which he lives his life - and which will keep him on top in 2016

WORDS JAMES HENDERSON PICTURES GETTY IMAGES

Seldom has someone so young, humble and respectful been so extravagantly brilliant. As the focus shifts beyond his excellence in 2015 to whether – with the world watching on – Jordan Spieth can repeat his heroics, the young man from Dallas is predictably calm and composed.

“If I can sit here in the same position, looking back on a similar 365 days, I will certainly be pleased,” says Spieth, after a season that yielded two Majors and a FedEx Cup among many other notable triumphs.

Winning is unlikely to be any easier than it was in 2015, with a rejuvenated Rory McIlroy and a confident Jason Day expected to spell an era of intense competition between the trio. Spieth knows his goals, if not his expectations.

“It’s hard for me to tell,” admits Spieth. “The goal is to win a Major and if that’s not accomplished it will hopefully be a great year away from those with a lot of close calls. That’s obviously going to be the primary focus given it’s the highest point in golf. We all know it creates legacies and has the biggest impact.”

Mention of legacies encourages thoughts of Grand Slams as well as the records of Tiger and Jack. Spieth is thinking more short term, identifying the areas in which he can improve.

“That bit’s easy,” he explains. “You just get very specific with it and find out ways you can improve in every single category. I’m not saying I’m going to change anything but I can focus a bit more on certain shots.”

The statistics tell Spieth that he ranks lowly on driving distance – 78th during the 2015 PGA Tour season – behind notorious big-hitters such as McIlroy and Day, as well as Dustin Johnson and Bubba Watson. It is suggested Spieth must generate more power to consistently challenge, even if wins at Augusta, Chambers Bay and East Lake counter such an opinion. Even so, Spieth is happy to acknowledge a recurring theme.

“I can get longer,” he admits. “It’s a combination of my swing and what I do in the gym. I can get better in places ball-striking wise and I can certainly improve tee-to-green in different categories.”

While Spieth is hardly the sort of character to be self-satisfied, he admits he has been happy with his work around the greens. He has good reason. At times in 2015, the hole seemed to **double** in size whenever he lined up from over 20 feet; think of his 45-footer at the Hero World Challenge or his 28-footer at the Valspar Championship, among others.

“There’s definitely stuff that we can tweak but obviously I would like my short game to stay consistent with how it was last year,” says the man America will hope can lead them to a much-needed victory in the Ryder Cup.

Those biennial matches against Europe are just one exciting week in what promises to be golf’s most exciting and busiest year ever.

With a patently packed 2016 season



Not his Day
Spieth was impressive even in defeat at the US PGA.

‘You only get four Majors a year and to have an opportunity to win all of them was so cool. I left it all out there’

beckoning, Spieth and his team – consisting primarily of caddie Michael Greller and coach Cameron McCormick – are fine-tuning accordingly, complimenting technical sessions with ongoing mental work for the 22 year old.

Spieth’s schedule is also under the microscope, given the impending stresses and strains of 2016. The benefit of having even a few days away from the action is not lost on the ‘Lone Star Statesman’, who found out the hard way the consequences of not managing time and energy during his early years on Tour.

“I learned it in 2014, I didn’t rest much,” he recalls. “I ran out of strength so this past year I’ve been better at conserving energy. Even although I played a lot, I took some more time off and limited practice to save energy.”

The need for self-preservation will be paramount as golf’s introduction into the Olympics poses scheduling headaches for the game’s leading players. A tightened calendar will see the US Open, Open and US PGA contested during a seven-week stretch, followed by the Olympics, FedEx Cup and Ryder Cup across a cramped eight-week run.

“2016 is going to be a difficult year but I don’t think it will affect the amount of tournaments I play,” says Spieth. “But it is important to take time off and have a break.”

As ‘Team Spieth’ makes plans on the

drawing board for 2016, they do so bound, not blinded, by the accomplishments of 2015. Yet managing tournament invitations and demands on his time is a sensitive operation.

Already a huge draw card across the world, talk of a famous quadruple will reignite should Spieth once again reign at Augusta come the early weeks of April. Grand Slam talk annually begins every Monday after the Masters but last year died later than it usually does, namely the Monday after the US Open.

Instead, Spieth prolonged the possibility for a month longer. He could barely have taken the dream of a third consecutive Major any further along the road as the sport willed him to victory at The Open.

One would imagine Spieth is philosophical



Master Spieth
Major No.1 arrived with bewildering composure.



about finishing one shot shy of Zach Johnson at St Andrews and then subsequently the (by-then irrelevant) three shots he was adrift of Jason Day at Whistling Straits. Being four swings of a club short of a Grand Slam is surely not enough to keep him awake at night?

"You can look at it two different ways," Spieth says. "That I was four shots shy of the Grand Slam or that if Dustin's putt went in, I would have lost the US Open."

Indeed. Johnson's infamous three-putt from 15-feet handed Spieth unexpected back-to-back Majors in June, providing the American with a dose of realism – possibly even a reminder of the role played by the hand of fate – that is useful when reflecting on the achievements and near-misses in a year.

"You only get four Majors a year and to have an opportunity to win all of them was so cool," he adds. "After winning the first two legs the noise started to come about but it's a whole other animal just to win a Major in general."

"It's not easy, it takes a lot out of you and I left it all out there. It really does wear you out mentally, trying to grind that much."

While Spieth's disappointment at watching

his Claret Jug and Wanamaker Trophy dreams evaporate cannot be masked by previous successes, he's quick to remind that he has no regrets. Or does he? Watching his birdie putt edge three inches left of the 18th hole of St Andrews Old Course in front of Monday's crowds was, he admits, tough to handle.

"That was the hardest part to get over," admits Spieth, who denied himself a spot in the Open Championship play-off as a result.

"It wasn't trying to win a Grand Slam. I knew the history of it but my frustration was only that we were tied for the lead with two holes to go and we didn't close it out."

"And we didn't even get into a play-off. I certainly have a chip on my shoulder because of that Major that I'm wanting to get off."

The lucrative FedEx Cup play-offs offered some end-of-season solace for Spieth as his post-Open year encompassed a rollercoaster of emotions. Less than two weeks after it began, Spieth's tenure as world No.1 ended following missed cuts during the opening play-off double-header, the first time he'd failed to make the weekend on consecutive occasions.

"People can give up on you easily," he recalls. "You can go through the lows of a season so quickly after you're high."

The bounce back was an astonishing display of putting to win the Tour Championship and claim the game's biggest cheque, capping off a memorable season on the PGA Tour.

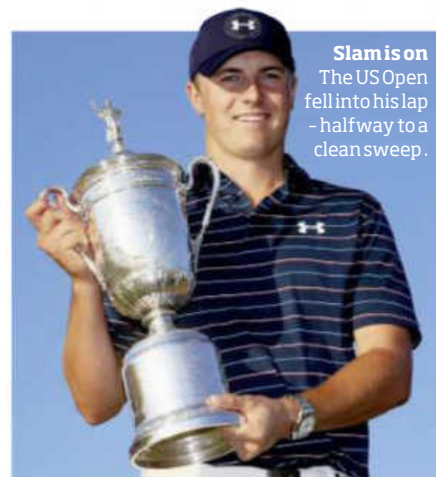
"To not care about my form and to come into the brightest stages and perform gives me a lot of confidence going forward because there's going to be ups and there's going to be downs, I know it," he adds.

"But to be able to bounce back that quickly from the lows was really cool."

Landing the \$11.5million FedEx Cup jackpot won't have raised the decibel levels in the Spieth household, and neither will total earnings for 2015 that sit at \$22 million (surpassing the \$20.9million set by Tiger Woods in 2007).

Earning a million dollars for every year he's been on the planet doesn't excite Spieth, but the position it grants him does.

"Money allows me to, now even more so, take care of the people that have given me this position and allowed this to happen," he adds.



Slam is on
The US Open fell into his lap – halfway to a clean sweep.

"Like I always say, it's a team effort."

"A lot of behind the scenes work goes in when we're at home, when we're in the early stages and on course."

Spieth craves adulation in as small a measure as he does money but the reality is, sporting America fell in love with him during his Masters coronation and gutsy US Open victory. More fans followed as he smiled through the sadness of failing to add The Open. It's not just the trophies, birdies and clutch putting that endears Spieth to the world, it is his humility, personality and charisma. For the man himself, it is just standard practice.

"It's how the game was founded," he adds. "It's a game of integrity. There's no referee out there. We all respect each other."

"I don't think in any other sport do you see two opposing teams that are complimenting after each shot or touchdown or whatever it is."

"In Texas you learn to just be nice to people and respect where they're coming from. It's about understanding that we all have different backgrounds and opinions, and there's nothing you can do about it."

His level head has made Spieth's transition into the real world easier. Since leaving the University of Texas early to turn pro, winning the John Deere Classic later that same year of 2013, he has enjoyed six PGA Tour victories. His achievements to date suggest success was always written in stars. Yet Spieth remembers student life differently, and the vital part they played in turning talented boy to mature man.

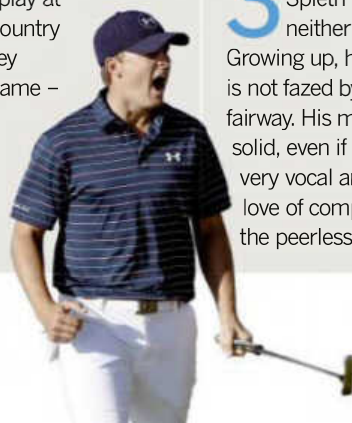
JORDAN'S BIG THREE STRENGTHS

1 HE PUTTS LIKE A HERO

Jordan made 62 putts from 15-25 feet in 2015 – a make rate at that distance of more than 27 per cent. How good is that? Of the last seven leaders in this stat, no-one was better than 24 per cent. The only people to get close to 25 per cent since the stat started to be kept in 2004 were Jesper Parnevik (26 per cent, '07) and Jamie Donaldson (26 per cent, '15).

2 HE LOVES IT OUT THERE

Spieth learned to play at the Brookhaven Country Club in Dallas, where they stressed the fun of the game – not swing plane and positions. He is not weighed down by technical thoughts cluttering his brain.



3 HE RELISHES THE BATTLE

Spieth isn't monster long, but neither is he short off the tee. Growing up, he was often outdriven – but is not fazed by playing first from the fairway. His mentality is generally rock solid, even if at times it seems like he gets very vocal and very pumped up. Only his love of competing enabled him to push the peerless Jason Day at the US PGA.



Great days
Spieth and Rory
McIlroy look set
to be rivals for
years to come.

I miss school [college] and parts of me wish that I was there to experience it in full'

"Those three semesters were the bridge that was built between the foundation I had growing up and being able to succeed on and off the course," he adds. "In college you learn you have to live on your own. You learn how to do stuff on your own, you learn work ethic and as far as golf is concerned, you learn to not be pushed by anybody other than your own teammates or coach.

"You get better at going out and doing what you want to do, staying away from too many distractions while still trying to have an experience you can learn from.

"I miss school [college] and parts of me wish that I was there to experience it in full but I made the right decision at the right time."

With career winnings in excess of \$30million, honours from Augusta to Australia and a place already carved in golfing history, few would argue it was not a good decision.

Yet you will find no sign of achievements if you wander around Spieth's sprawling Texan home. To the uninitiated, he would appear just another college hopeful.

"It's never something I've done," adds Spieth, who dreamed of becoming a baseball

player. "I've never wanted to just display stuff. What good does it do me to have my friends over and just flaunt it in their faces? I just keep them in my room and go for the next one."

The 'next one' could be the Masters and it could be in three months' time. Confident in his ability to deliver the Major goods, Spieth can let others worry about the finer details.

His is a confidence laced with caution, aware that fate can rob even the most talented of titles they may have deserved. Spieth is, nevertheless, poised to enter the Hall of Fame, even if his modesty is not sure of his validity.

"That's obviously a long-term goal," says Spieth, when reminded of his World Golf Hall of Fame eligibility. "That means that you're one of the people that have had the biggest impact on and off the course on the game of golf.

"And I don't feel that way. I don't feel eligible. I don't feel that that's a fair comparison right now, even if on course the accomplishments are close. I believe that we can get there. But we've still got a way to go.

"Sure, I've got doubts about stuff, but not really on the golf course. I feel confident when we're in position, I feel confident that we can get the job done no matter where we are now. Again, things still have to fall your way, you have to get the right breaks in the end to win a tournament, and I'll have plenty where I'm in contention and won't close it out."

Spieth's mesmerising 12 months has been characterised by being the closer more times than he has been closed out. It has been the year of 'Eat. Sleep. Win. Respect.' Now to see if he can keep pressing Repeat.

FIVE STEPS TO BECOMING A LEGEND

JORDAN'S KEY FEATS IN 2015

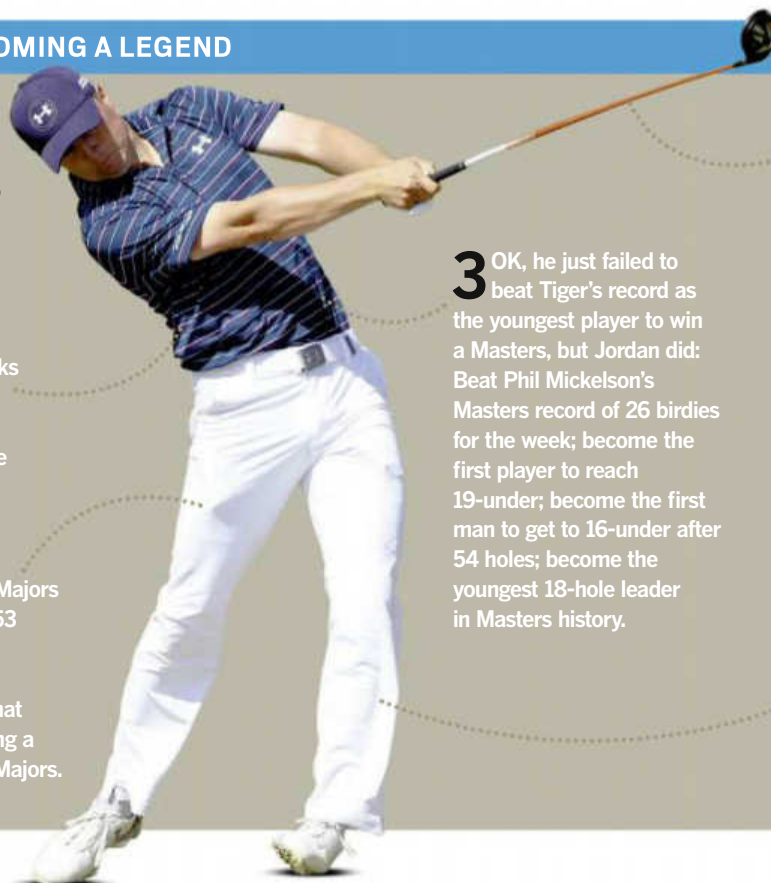
1 He won \$22,030,465 in 2015 (including his \$10m FedEx Cup bonus). That breaks Tiger Woods' former single-year record of \$20,867,052 earned back in 2007 when he also won the FedEx Cup.

2 When Tiger set a Majors scoring record of 53 under in 2000, many thought it wouldn't be broken. Jordan beat that mark in 2015, amassing a 54-under total at the Majors.

3 OK, he just failed to beat Tiger's record as the youngest player to win a Masters, but Jordan did: Beat Phil Mickelson's Masters record of 26 birdies for the week; become the first player to reach 19-under; become the first man to get to 16-under after 54 holes; become the youngest 18-hole leader in Masters history.

4 Spieth's combined Majors score of 1,090 broke Woods' record of 1,095, set in 2000, and beat Tiger's 2000 score, relative to par, 54 under to 53 under.

5 He led the Tour in scoring average (68.93), putts per round (27.82), one-putt percentage (44.26), putting from 20-25 feet (25.93%), and par 4 scoring (3.93).



RIPPING UP THE RULES WITH

GOLF'S NEW INNOVATORS



The inside stories of six pioneers in today's game, including:

The Tour chief

How Mike Whan has revolutionised the ladies' Tour in America

The watch king

Gary Butler's route from IT guru to owning a luxury watch brand

The social star

European Tour social media is a must-follow, due to Jamie Kennedy

The architect

Why feted Kyle Phillips has decided to rip up the design rules

The billionaire

Bob Parsons is taking on golf's gear giants; they should be worried

The stats guru

Richard Peabody thinks he can turn nomadic golfers into members

MIKE WHAN

The Tour saviour

He turned a crisis-hit LPGA Tour into one of the world's fastest-growing professional circuits

Golf has been special to me my whole life. I was that crazy high school kid cutting greens at 5.30am so he could play free golf in the afternoon – and I decided to make golf a career move in my early 30s (Wilson and TaylorMade). So the opportunity to really be part of the golf business in a major way [with the LPGA Tour] was just too hard to pass up. And I've never been one that looks at words like 'issues' or 'challenges' or 'problems' as bad words. What they represent is tremendous upside potential.

When I look back [on starting in 2010], we had a goal of rebuilding the LPGA schedule to about 32 or 34 events from the 23 we introduced in 2011. In the 2015 schedule it was pretty nice to renew every tournament that needed to be renewed, lose nobody and add a couple of events. Hopefully the LPGA's a little more predictable than we have been the last five or six years.

We wanted to make our big events bigger because the LPGA doesn't get 34 moments that are broadly covered. We get six or seven moments. So we have been committed to better TV – back then we had 200 hours on Golf Channel, now we've got 400-plus. When I started, 60 per cent of our time was taped delayed – now it's 92 per cent live. But I want to be on NBC or CBS or ABC more, to enable us to step outside the golf vernacular.

The term partnership is frankly what we consider the most important thing we do at the LPGA. Big LPGA tournaments simply don't happen without quality business partners. I've been on the other side of the table [as the sponsor] more than I've been on this side. I know there are a lot of ways to spend corporate money.

Women's golf is built on

the shoulders of heroes, business heroes that want to give women in the game an opportunity to be showcased around the world.

We are 100 per cent refocused on what's important as an organisation; for us, that's the customer. Maybe our fans don't want to hear that, but we realised we had to do more than play a golf tournament. We had spent way too much time talking about pin placements, about how many players are in the field, and where the ropes are going to be, and where

'The Commissioner title gives you way too much credit and way too much blame'

the media centre should be. As a result, we have added more tournaments. Happier customers generated more customers.

The title of Commissioner gives you way too much credit and way too much blame. I would love to lie to you and say that it's been my leadership that's turned it around. But that's not true. Role reversal has been the most important thing – spending more time talking about the person who is writing the cheque than who is going to win the cheque.

When our players sign up for an event, they get a two-page form called the customer profile sheet. The form says on the very top who is writing the cheque this week; and then it says why, and then it says what are their key objectives and shows pictures of the key executives and customers that are going to be here this week. It suggests what you should Tweet and Facebook. It tells you where to send your thank-you cards; not should you, but where to send your thank-you cards. I think we are a better business partner today.

I told my team it would be nice in the future if the schedule announcement wasn't so much drama. When the PGA Tour announces their schedule, sometimes it's just an e-mail because people know it is going to be strong and stable. I feel like we're coming over a hill. I hope my next five years – knock on wood – are more like this. It's stability with growth as opposed to dramatic, dramatic swings.

I look at some PGA Tour events and go, 'gosh that's a lot of people out there'. And then they say 'they're in the 47th playing of the fill in the blank'. 47th playing? There's some jealousy about that. So we needed to build some stability and roots in our schedule, so that when we're delivering ourselves to a market, we're not always saying, 'this is our second or third year'.

● Mike Whan is Commissioner of the LPGA Tour.

**SAVED
THE LPGA
TOUR**

GARY BUTLER

The brand builder

He's gone from IT maestro to launching the first watch specifically designed for golfers

A sun lounge in the Algarve. The Shard in London. The R&A clubhouse in St Andrews. And a hotel in Newbury. It sounds like a random selection of destinations, but all are key points in my journey to launching Etiquis last year.

It began on the sun lounge in 2002, when the battery in my 'cheap' watch (for swimming etc) ran out. My daughter chose a new one for me, a funky thing, and as I lay on the sun bed with a beer, a guy came along and said "when did you take up diving?". I said I hadn't, but he told me I had a diving watch on and showed me how it worked. I said "I'm not a diver, I'm a golfer". A little seed had been planted.

It kicked around in my head for a while as I understood a bit more about watches – Tags Omegas, Rolexes, Breitlings – and that most sports watches have a bezel, a rotating ring on the outside. Most have a mathematical formula on them and my engineering degree told me that what looked like random numbers as design features actually meant something. A time-elapse bezel, for example, tells divers how much oxygen they have used.

I reasoned manufacturers make a watch to function but sell them on emotion – normally a connection with a past-time or sport. I studied watches, whether in airports or over four hours at all 4,600 watches on Amazon

from that hotel room in Newbury, and realised there was nothing for golfers. Then in 2009 I joined my golf club committee as I waited for my next job in IT. I had to brush up on the rules of golf and noticed the R&A was getting more concerned with pace of play guidelines.

I know pace equals speed and speed equals distance over time. Distance is the length of the course and time is the face of a watch. It was a kind of a eureka moment. The R&A's suggested time for a round is under three hours 50, so I could work out the algorithm for the hole sequence you see on my bezel. So, I knew there wasn't a watch for golfers and now had this credible pace of play concept.

I had to patent it. I got one in the UK in 2011. But the US refused. They were clearly wrong on a couple of points, so we had a conference

call from The Shard with the US Patent office in Virginia and another US attorney. About 17 minutes after starting, we had a patent.

The obvious thing to do was license my designs to existing manufacturers, so I often flew to Switzerland. But I was a guy from Macclesfield rocking up at a big multi-national spending millions on R&D saying 'I've got this great idea'. Dead end. So I needed someone to make the watch. I know a little about a lot, so I needed people who knew a lot about a little. I found a fantastic British manufacturer.

The investment so far is in the order of half a million. Getting patents and IPR is not cheap – they are legal expenses. Product development, design, making prototypes, building a website, packaging, fulfilment... they are not cheap. Then you have to buy stock – and there's minimal order quantities.

The biggest challenge? Communication to the golfer. Etiquis is a watch for golfers, not a golf watch, like a Garmin or Skycaddie. I don't consider it golf equipment, it is golf lifestyle.

There's a saying: 'men clock each other's watch like women clock each other's shoes'. See someone wearing an Etiquis watch and you know they are a golfer. Instantly there is a relationship borne out of the spirit of golf. You elevate that person as "a good guy". Being identified as a golfer is a mark of honour and you quickly get to a level of trust. It's also why I've raised £12,000 for the Golf Foundation.

Fifteen months ago we hadn't sold a watch, now we are up to 1,000, from Belgium to France to Denmark to New York. And I always laugh when I send one to Switzerland.

● Gary Butler founded Etiquis watches. 📷

'I always laugh when I send one of my Etiquis watches to Switzerland'

**FIRST
WATCH FOR
GOLFERS**



JAMIE KENNEDY

Social media whizzkid

Those cool clips and stats we see from the European Tour? They're all down to this man

I started playing golf on North Berwick's 'wee' course and by age 18, as well as playing rugby [as befits the son of a 1984 Grand Slam winner], I had got down to +2 and went on a scholarship to Jacksonville University. I did a Marketing degree but mainly played golf – with the likes of Dustin Johnson, Jason Dufner and Webb Simpson. My room-mate for four years was Russell Knox. Six months after arriving, Facebook began. It was only available to those with an American university email address. I had one, so I signed up. It exploded, and made me curious about different ways of telling stories. After university I developed a stat-based blog (including predicting Bubba's Masters win) before working for a website.

The European Tour decided they needed someone dedicated to social media but I don't think either of us knew how it was going to grow. I thought we could be more exciting and talk to a younger audience sitting on their phones open to the idea of seeing Rory hit a 380-yard drive on Protracer, or curious to see what Miguel's warm up looks like on a GoPro camera. But it wasn't until I travelled to events

'Players understand the idea of their 'brand' and the reach a video has online'

I really grasped the challenge and opportunity of what social media means to the Tour.

I'm really proud of our content now. I love the inclusion of live video; we can clip up a great shot within 10 seconds and share moments almost immediately – essential in Twitter and Facebook's ever-shortening 'viral window'. It's great to work with players on light-humoured things – such as the Ivor Robson impressions.

I wouldn't say I know the players well, but I think they know who I am. Knowing which ones might be up for some funny stuff rather than just an interview – and choosing where and when to approach them – is important. Generally, players are really up for it. More and more they understand the idea of their 'brand' and the reach an article or video can have online. Occasionally they'll approach us with an idea on something they've seen that we could do. Filming Danny Willett playing the 18th at Wentworth from a player's perspective is an example (and he really did make birdie).

Our social media 'success' is measured in different ways. Analytics teams go through the data to help shape what we might do in the future and I also work closely with Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. In some ways social media is just another vehicle for European Tour information. In other ways, it's a platform all on its own with specific plans and targets.

I travel with a lot of equipment. My carry-on luggage can be heavier than my checked bag! At events, I will typically have two laptops, my iPhone, two or three GoPro cameras, a regular digital camera, a wifi dongle, a European Tour media guide (crucial!) and plenty of notepads.

Social media's hours aren't exactly 'sociable'. We play in 28 different countries, which is a lot of timezones. Things are always happening too, so you must be ready to react. It means some scary-looking wake-up calls or office hours, but I wouldn't change it. I love my job.

The future of golf media is the million dollar question. We're not in the sports business, we're in the entertainment business. Content is now more user-focused; the challenge is understanding that and how you shape an article, video etc from the fans' point of view.

● **Jamie Kennedy is social media manager for the European Tour.**

MAKING
TOUR NEWS
COOL



CREATING MORE FUN COURSES

KYLE PHILLIPS

The radical architect

Why a round of golf doesn't have to be 18 holes, insists the creator of Kingsbarns and The Grove

It feels like a good time to be trying to be innovative in golf. The game we all love needs to grow and if we all do a little to help that, we will all benefit.

Murtoli on the island Corsica is an example of that. I designed this 12-hole course to reflect the history and organic nature of the site. It is a different kind of resort so it's appropriate it should have a different kind of golf course. It is situated in an incredible landscape of 6,000 acres encompassing mountains, sea, beaches, river plains and 17 homes dating back to the 16th Century.

It was my intention that it should pay homage to the first Scottish links with a multi-dimensional golf course that can be played clockwise or counterclockwise in 47 different tee-to-green combinations. It helps that the property's exclusivity affords players the freedom to choose their own course in games where matchplay and shot-making supersede par. Hole options vary from 110 to 550 yards and you can play the course according to your

ability or simply your mood that day, as it can be played in multiple nine-hole par-31, 12-hole par-44, or 18-hole par-67 configurations.

I am committed to short courses and practice facilities whenever I build new 18-hole courses. These are the opportunities to introduce golf in a gentle form to both children and adult non-golfers. These facilities are the 'bunny slopes' of golf and vital to the future growth of the game. Why should we be surprised fewer people enter the game when we continue to send these novices down the black diamond slopes of a championship course?

I am not sure we can quantify how helpful reversible courses are to growing the game,

'The course can be played clockwise or vice versa in 47 tee-to-green combinations'

but I believe they do create that required element of fun and an opportunity to have two diverse courses within the layout of a single course. I believe there are even more radical layouts that might help golf grow – but it must be a compelling experience that will generate the necessary turnover to make it sustainable.

Marrying 'fun' standard courses with a course that tests elite players is not easy. The 'tee it forward' concept is somewhat helpful, but players are still required to walk the entire course, making for a time-consuming circuit and slowing up general course play.

I think there is a place for artificial greens and tees on training courses. For example, by using artificial target greens on a practice range allows those greens to be easily transformed into a series of par-3 holes for children and beginners.

Which project have I been at my most innovative? In 2000 I would have said Kingsbarns Golf Links, then 10 years later it would have been Yas Links in Abu Dhabi, then recently I have created Murtoli, which is more obviously innovative. In 2020 it will be... I don't know, but it will be very interesting to look back on this and decide if innovation has continued and flourished. Stay tuned!

● Kyle Phillips is one of the world's leading course architects. 📍



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£3,500

'I failed 5th grade at high school. Everything I have accomplished I owe to the Marine Corps'

performs. I had absolutely no doubt PXG equipment would appeal to those golfers with means who value performance above everything. Our sales are growing 50-60 per cent month-over-month and the feedback we receive has shattered my wildest expectations.

We set out to create the finest golf equipment in the world and I believe we have done just that. We had a number of fails along the way, but when we had our breakthrough I knew our clubs would be special. We have no plans to release a new series of equipment until we are absolutely certain the look, performance and feel is significantly better than what we currently offer. That should take quite a while.

Every venture I have launched has started as a passion project. My dad used to say, "Robert, when you do the thing you love it'll tell you all its secrets." But don't let that fool you, I am a businessman and PXG is very much a business venture.

I have been friends with club designer Mike Nicolette [former Ping product designer and winner of the 1983 Bay Hill Invitational] for years. We kicked around the idea of building clubs together and one day it just made sense to get started, so he joined along with Brad Schweigert [was Ping director of engineering].

Ryan Moore wouldn't send back the prototype clubs because he liked them so much. His enthusiasm for the technology actually forced us to get a move on obtaining our USGA approvals so that he could put the clubs in play at the Hyundai Tournament of Champions.

Everything I have accomplished I owe to the Marine Corps. I failed 5th grade, but enlisted in the Marines. I was a combat rifleman, serving in Vietnam's rice paddies and mountains. There, I learned what was really important: The only thing that really matters is what's happening now; most things we worry about are pretty trivial; how we think absolutely determines our fate; how important it is to do what I say I'm going to do and be reliable.

Success is part passion, part perspective, part luck – and a whole lot of effort.

● **Bob Parsons made his fortune in Go Daddy before setting up Parsons Xtreme Golf.**

BOB PARSONS

Taking on gear giants

The billionaire Vietnam vet who is now making £3,500 clubs – and getting Tour stars to play them

I hit as many balls in a week as most pros – possibly more. I play three rounds per week on average too, sometimes at Scottsdale National, which I now own. I played with my dad and brother but didn't start taking it seriously 'til my 30s.

Golf bites you for many reasons; it's fun, a diversion, and a chance for camaraderie. Even with a shallow skill level (I'm off 10), you hit an incredible shot sometimes. That's the hook.

I am absolutely obsessed with equipment and how the right clubs can help improve my game. Before launching PXG (Parsons Xtreme Golf), I spent a quarter of a million dollars annually trying the latest equipment. You name it, I've played it! PXG was born out of my desire to do things differently and design the best golf equipment on the planet.

There is a segment of the market starved of something innovative – something that really

RICHARD PEABODY

Stats for 'nomads'

Golfingindex.com is the HowDidiDo off-shoot hoping to turn nomadic golfers into members

I was selling communication systems when a company that designed IT programmes for golf clubs moved into the office next door. We became friends, and then I started working for them.

The company was Club Systems International, which has created IT systems since it began in the '80s by a golf club member who got a programmer friend to write some software to calculate the handicaps at his club, Disley. The club down the road, Hazel Grove, heard about it, he sold them a computer and the software for £3,000 and it snowballed.

My aims when I joined were to expand into other areas; I implemented our own fully-integrated membership, handicap and EPOS system. Then eventually came HowDidiDo.

Membership is still the future of golf and my intention with Golfingindex.com is to

get 'nomads' playing golf as club members enjoy it, giving a level playing field to start playing in a more competitive way. Once they start, they will enjoy what golf club members get; not just a nice afternoon playing a healthy sport with a friend, but a competitive round that hopefully they want to experience more by joining a golf club and do every Saturday.

We noticed 'nomads' – there could be up to 3.5 million unregistered golfers – weren't enjoying the benefits of competitive golf or HowDidiDo. We explained to the authorities we weren't trying to create an alternative to an official handicap and that it should help build membership, with the index getting 'nomads' hooked so they'll want to join a club and get a handicap.

Nomads aren't 'outsiders', they're potential members. If we can get them

on a database and start to talk to them, we can at least get the stats on how many there actually are, how often they play and so on.

Golfingindex.com is a completely different product to HowDidiDo, written and designed completely separately from the ground up. We are now working on the digital Signinbook – it works in tandem with Golfingindex.com.

We're also working on contactless technology, the Golfingindex card, plans for the web and an online clubhouse for the member to be able to do most of his administration online. We're set to relaunch 'How Do I Pay?', an online portal for clubs to administer subs payments and members to top up bar cards.

We have plans for tie-ups with associations and other partners. We're starting to realise that, as an organisation with so many clubs within it, the likes of Golfingindex can help market the industry as a whole by working with the golf unions. That for me is the future of golf, getting organisations – commercial and non-profit – together to try to promote the sport. We don't believe participation levels are actually going down that much, it's just people are playing in different ways.

Golf is an honourable sport, whose rules are all about decency. Most people in golf adhere to those principles. People make a promise, shake your hand and usually just pay.

Being able to ally my interest in technology with sport is almost the ideal combination. But people probably think because it's a leisure industry, it's leisurely. From the outside a lot of people think all I do is play at really nice golf clubs. People comment on social media: 'oh you have a fantastic life!'. But you spend six days at The Open in meetings and everybody thinks you're in the champagne tent or following Rory. In fact you see about six balls being hit before you jump on a plane home and write up about six weeks of work.

● Richard Peabody is MD of Club Systems International

'Nomads aren't 'outsiders'... they're potential golf club members'

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MEMBERS**

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ADD 30 YARDS IN 30 MINUTES

14-page special starring the biggest hitter on Tour, a Top 50 teacher and TG readers

INSIDE

52 Dustin Johnson's exclusive advice

57 TG readers add 30 yards in 30 minutes

62 Chris Ryan's five power moves to master







DJ'S KEYS FOR MORE

ANCE

Let Dustin Johnson – the biggest hitter on the PGA Tour – show you how to hit it further

WORDS DUSTIN JOHNSON PICTURES TAYLORMADE, ANGUS MURRAY, GETTY

Get set...
You may not be as flexible as DJ, but he can still help.

Dustin Johnson is the longest hitter in the game today. His average drive on the PGA Tour last year travelled 317.7 yards – that's average – and he's been in the top four in driving distance on tour every year since 2007. "If I feel like I have to try to hit one far, then I'm not swinging correctly. Butch Harmon and I always talk about effortless power, instead of power with effort."

"When I'm on the launch monitor, when I'm swinging really hard – which I never do on a golf course – I can get one 330-335 in the air. A normal swing, when I'm on the golf course, it's going to fly maybe 300. Anywhere between 290 and 300. Obviously, I can step it up once in a while and maybe fly one 310. But I never like swinging with that mindset. I don't want to hit it hard. On a golf course, I might swing 85 to 90% at the highest."

We caught up with DJ to get more great advice from one of the world's best drivers of a golf ball...

Where does your power come from?

Power is a product of leverage, speed, strength, good mechanics and of course, properly fitted equipment. Being tall, I have a naturally big arc. However, I always focus on maintaining the width of my swing to maximise my power. Finally, you have to hit the ball solidly. No matter how much speed you generate, you will lose both power and accuracy on mishits.

What are your driving swing keys?

Personally, I always focus on



DJ'S 2015 DRIVING STATS

- Driving distance **317.7 yards (1)**
- Longest drive **406 yards (9)**
- Driving accuracy **55.53% (165)**
- Clubhead speed **121.49mph (7)**
- PGA Tour wins **Nine**
- Career money **\$29,943,060**

maintaining my posture/spine angle, which requires that I retain the flex in my right knee on the backswing. If my right knee stiffens, I lose my spine angle and my path changes, resulting in a loss of power and errant tee shots. I also focus on making a long, slow takeaway and swinging in balance.

How can club golfers hit it further?

Quite honestly, most golfers should place more emphasis on striking the ball solidly. Power begins with solid contact. Beyond solid contact and good mechanics, most golfers would benefit from becoming more flexible, especially as they age.

What are your top three driving tips for amateurs?

1. Focus on making solid contact, rather than just trying to hit it "hard."
2. Swing within yourself and maintain good posture and balance throughout the swing.
3. Invest in getting professionally fit with a driver (preferably a TaylorMade!) for maximum results. It's one of the best investments a golfer can make!

Do you ever change your set-up/ball position/tee height to hit specific tee shots?

I will sometimes tee it up a little higher downwind and vice versa. However, amateurs have to be very careful

LEARN FROM DJ'S SWING WITH HIS COACH, BUTCH HARMON

I want you to notice Dustin's beautiful rhythm and balance. The middle of the clubhead makes contact with the ball with a nice, smooth tempo, and he has a balanced finish. That rhythm and balance allow Dustin to make a good, aggressive, confident swing without over-swinging. That confidence is required on the tight driving holes of the PGA Tour.



Set up like this!

He and Butch have worked especially hard on keeping the flex in his right leg.



Wide takeaway

Dustin likes the clubhead to track back low and just inside the target line as his shoulders turn.



Building power

He and Harmon have worked hard on maintaining some flex in his right knee.

about teeing it up low when going against the wind, as they will often subconsciously make a "steeper" swing to help the ball into the air, which creates more spin and an ever higher ball flight.

What's more important on tour today – distance or accuracy?

Both! However, it seems the modern game is placing more emphasis on distance than on accuracy.

Do you favour a fade or a draw?

My natural ball flight is a soft draw, but I can work the ball either way when necessary.

Do you do anything different if you really want to boom one?

I mostly just focus on my normal swing keys, such as a long, slow takeaway, maintaining my spine angle, staying "wide" and swinging in balance. In terms of set-up, I sometimes tee the ball up slightly higher and move it forward in my stance just a tad.

Do you do anything different if you MUST hit the fairway?

Not too much, other than making sure I make a nice, controlled, balanced swing. I do, however, sometimes tee the ball down just a bit.

How many drives do you hit on the range before a round?

Fewer than you would think. I probably only hit five to eight drives before going to the first tee.



Have you picked up distance with the TaylorMade's M1 that you put in play at the end of last year?

Without question! It's the most technologically-advanced driver TaylorMade has ever designed, which has been years in the making. I saw an immediate increase in ball speed, which results in more distance. I also love the look and feel of it, which is a bonus. It's also the most functionally adjustable driver TaylorMade has ever produced, which really allows you to fine-tune your ball flight.

How do you set up the weights on the bottom?

I have the front track weight in the middle/neutral position, and the back track weight all the way back.

What are the most important Trackman numbers to you?

DJ'S POWER CHECKPOINTS

● Keeping my right knee flexed, letting my arms get back down in front of the clubhead – those things slow me down a little bit and keep me from over-swinging. Some of the longest drives I've ever hit are ones that felt easy and smooth.

● Great balance. I'm never coming out of my shoes. If I'm swinging correctly, I'm in balance.



I use Trackman to get a general feel for my launch, spin and ball speed numbers. However, there is no substitute for seeing my ball flight on the course under playing conditions.

How important is the right ball?

The right ball is very important. A ball with too much or too little spin can dramatically influence both distance and accuracy, especially at the professional level. The TaylorMade Tour Preferred ball has worked very well for me and I am excited about playing the 2016 model.

What's the best drive you've ever hit?

That's hard to say, but the one I hit on the 72nd hole at the US Open (Chambers Bay) last year was pretty special (he smashed one 370 yards straight down the middle).

Do you admire any other long games?

Jason Day has a beautiful long game, as does Adam Scott.

Do your playing partners ever say "Jesus, that's long!"

Haha! Yeah, I hear some pretty funny comments, especially when I really catch one.

Are Tour players hitting it further every year?

It certainly seems that way. The younger players are bigger, stronger, more focused on their fitness, which is a good thing.



If it ain't broke...

Butch hasn't tried to "fix" Dustin's unusual bowed left wrist at the top because it works for him.



Fast unwind

His flexibility and athleticism allows a strong, fast unwind as he approaches the impact position.



Power-packed

That athleticism allows him to unleash tremendous power into the golf ball.



Beautiful balance

Dustin talks about it above – when he's swinging well, he's in balance. You should be, too.



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HOW WE GAINED... 30 yards in minutes

These two TG readers picked up more than 30 yards in just half an hour – you could do it, too

WORDS DUNCAN LENNARD, SIMON DADDOW
PICTURES BOB ATKINS

Ok, we admit it sounds a bit far-fetched. Adding 30 yards to your drives in one 30-minute session is the kind of thing that only happens while you're asleep, right? Well, we weren't so sure.

For a start, golf retail tracking experts Datatech tells us the average British golfer updates their driver once every five years. With leading brands pumping serious cash into R&D, and the consequent pace of modern golf club technology advances, a five-year-old driver is potentially yielding significant performance to the latest models.

Then there is the custom-fit element. The distance rewards of having a driver tailored to your build and technique have never been better understood, and customising itself never so well delivered. A modern fitting alone could add serious yardage.

And finally, of course, there is the golf swing itself. With the relationship between biomechanics and technique consolidated, even a couple of quick tips from an enlightened coach could add quick yards.

To get to the bottom of all this, we took two readers with non-customised, five-year-old drivers to The Belfry to be fitted into the latest model of their favoured brand. Launch monitors would record their performance with their existing driver, and then with the new, fitted driver. Finally, Belfry senior coach Chris Ryan would give each golfer two quick technical power pointers. Following this, the launch monitor would be wheeled out for a third time to chart the total distance gains.

Still think that gaining 30 yards in 30 minutes is the stuff of dreams? Prepare to be amazed... ➔

**DEREK
FURLONG**
HCP: 12

**MIKE
PYETT**
HCP: 13

Mike Pyett Handicap 13

Current driver: King Cobra X Speed (8.5°, stiff Aldila NV shaft)



Mike is your typical middle-aged club golfer. He's played the game for more years than he'd like to admit and his

swing is repeatable. He's got a tendency to miss a few shots left with a banana-shaped hook and when his timing's off, drives are prone to ending up in the right rough. He, like many golfers, had not been fitted for his Cobra driver.

Before the fitting

Mike's own driver was the Cobra X Speed, launched in 2006. Technology has moved on in leaps and bounds since so Cobra's fitter James was confident he'd be able to improve on Mike's numbers. The low 8.5° loft and stiff flex which was on a pretty demanding shaft profile (the Aldila NV) robbed Mike of the opportunity to flight shots to maximise distance. Looking at Mike's numbers his launch angle of 10.6° and peak shot height of 18.48 yards were both way too low. So it didn't take the fitter any time at all to point out "there's no bunkers in the sky so let's get launch

up and see what effect it has on distance".

After the fitting

James started Mike on Cobra's King Ltd driver with a 10.5° loft and a stiff shaft. Thanks to the extra loft he saw an immediate increase in launch angle (3.5°). And when you launch it higher you carry it further, so this simple change alone added an easy 26 yards of carry distance. Next we tried a regular flex shaft just to see if we could eke out a few extra mph of swing speed and boost Mike's distance further. But Mike lost a bit of rhythm and his dispersion pattern widened, so we were forced to admit this was a step too far in favour of distance over overall performance. During the fit Mike also hit Cobra's F6+ driver, which delivered very similar numbers to the King Ltd, giving him the option of all-out raw power (with the King Ltd) or additional CG adjustability (with the F6+). In the end Mike plumped for the F6+ because of its CG adjustability which he can play about with as his game develops.

THE STATS

Mike's own driver: Cobra X Speed

Club speed: 95.6mph
Ball speed: 138mph
Launch angle: 10.6°
Backspin: 1,884rpm
Carry distance: 211 yds



Mike's new driver: Cobra King F6+

Club speed: 96.6mph
Ball speed: 140mph
Launch angle: 12.3°
Backspin: 2,460rpm
Carry distance: 232 yds



FITTING GAIN
21 YARDS!

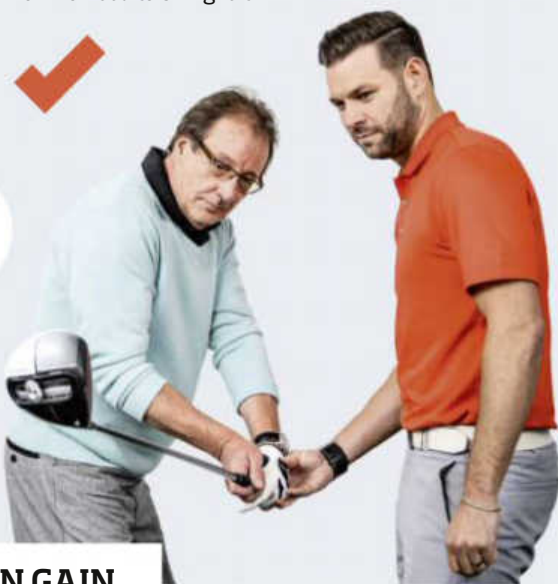


Distance drain 1: Open clubface

Mike's fundamental distance-sapper is hitting down on the ball, an attack angle inevitably mated with an out-to-in, slicing path. But before we tackled this, we first had to address an issue that may be causing it. During Mike's downswing his clubface falls well open; the lead wrist cups and the clubface looks at the sky. It's likely Mike senses this and swings left to compensate for it.



1



**INSTRUCTION GAIN
10 YARDS!**

**Distance drain 2: Hitting down on the ball**

A good, high launch is one of my five power sources (see page 54), but Mike's out-to-in shape caused him to hit down on the ball. When you do this, you must add loft to the face to get the ball up. A steep attack with extra loft can only give the ball a weak, choppy glancing blow, and creates a high 'spin loft' reading that robs the ball of distance.

2

**Solution: Place an obstacle in front of the ball**

The first step to curing this was to squash the need to send the ball left, by getting Mike to square the face on the way down. The second was to place a headcover a foot in front of the ball and ask him to hit the ball up and right, the clubhead missing the headcover. That simple change of intention helped Mike find this much improved launch position, and a stronger ballflight.

TOTAL GAIN IN 30 MINUTES 31 YARDS!

Mike says: "I'm genuinely surprised, and delighted! I've never been fitted before, and it's been a revelation, while Chris' simple adjustments to my swing yielded even more extra distance I never knew I had!"

2

Derek Furlong **Handicap 12**

Current driver: TaylorMade Burner Superfast (10.5°, stiff Graphite Design YS-6+ shaft)



Derek's your typical younger golfer. Keen, athletic and capable of winding up to hit some big drives. His swing is a bit up and down with peaks and troughs on the numbers, but when he catches the middle he gets some serious air time. Derek hadn't been custom fitted for his driver, but his club pro had replaced the shaft when he broke the original.

Before the fitting

Neil, TaylorMade's fitter, spotted an issue with Derek's driver as soon as he stepped through The Belfry's front door. He'd noted that Derek's club pro, though probably well meaning, had installed an excellent quality but very heavy Graphite Design shaft in his Burner driver. Knowing you need a swing speed like Dustin Johnson to get the most out of this shaft, he realised there was massive potential for improvement. Using his own driver Derek saw some large fluctuations between shots he "caught" and those he didn't. We saw a massive 24-yard drop off between his best and worst drives. For us

this highlights how important MOI is in a modern driver as it has the ability to minimise these drop offs when you spray shots around the face.

After the fitting

By switching to a 20g lighter shaft Derek was able to properly load the shaft with energy and get it working through **impact** which incredibly meant his swing **speed** leapt by 11.5mph. It took a couple of shaft tweaks to get a good balance between lightweight and stability, but it was worth the effort. In the end he plumped for the Fujikura Pro shaft, which was right between the lightest shaft he tried and his own driver. Neil also measured where Derek impacted shots on the face. Noticing there was a tendency to strike shots on the toe he moved the M1's shot bias weight to combat this pattern. Derek's transformation with the custom-fitted driver highlights how beneficial a proper fitting session is. Not everyone will gain 39 yards, but there are plenty of golfers playing with unfitted equipment that is holding their distance back.

THE STATS

Derek's own driver: TaylorMade Burner Superfast

Club speed: 91.5mph
Ball speed: 132mph
Launch angle: 12.2°
Backspin: 1998rpm
Carry distance: 213 yds



Derek's new driver: TaylorMade M1 460

Club speed: 104.7mph
Ball speed: 151.8mph
Launch angle: 12°
Backspin: 2363rpm
Carry distance: 252 yds



FITTING GAIN
39 YARDS!

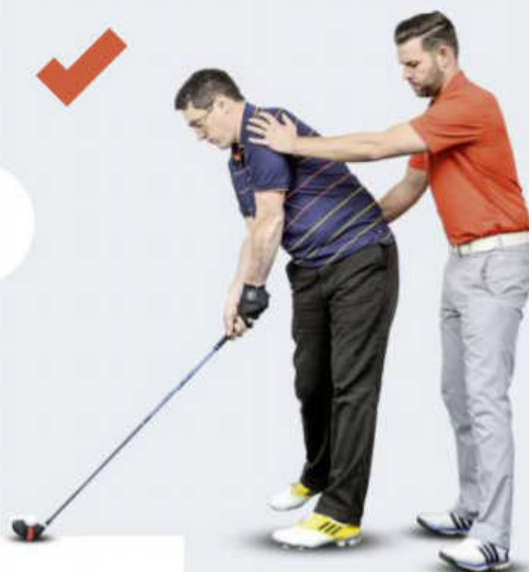


Distance drain 1: Armsy strike

Because Derek was so upright on the way back, he could not open up on the way down. He'd put himself in a position where his body had to stall to allow his arms to swing down, making him very side-on at impact and reliant on hand/arm strength for power. Derek could still get it out there, but to do so he had to hit at 100% of his swing capacity – hindering consistency.

**Solution: Release with the big body muscles**

To maintain a more rotational action, I got Derek to engage his lower body muscles more to start the downswing, driving that left knee (see power source #4) and then rotating with the hips. His feeling was of sending the grip of the club 'up and in', a move which flings the club powerfully down and out through the ball. A ball speed shift from 145mph into the mid-150s shows it was successful.



1

INSTRU
12 YARDS!

**Distance drain 2: Too upright**

Derek's action is actually pretty strong – he hits up on the ball, with a good path. But where he loses power is in the plane of his action, which is too upright. His left arm swings back very steeply, and there is very little hip and shoulder turn. Because of this lack of rotation, he doesn't really engage the big, powerful muscles in his hips and legs, which makes him shorter than he could be.



2

Solution: Deeper hip turn

To get more powerful rotation into Derek's swing, we focused on his hip turn. By getting him to feel like he was pointing his belt buckle to the back of the mat, we were able to flatten off his plane and let him feel this more rotational motion – his lead arm now much closer to his shoulder angle. Derek could then recruit those bigger muscles, creating a far more powerful backswing coil.

TOTAL GAIN IN 30 MINUTES 51 YARDS!

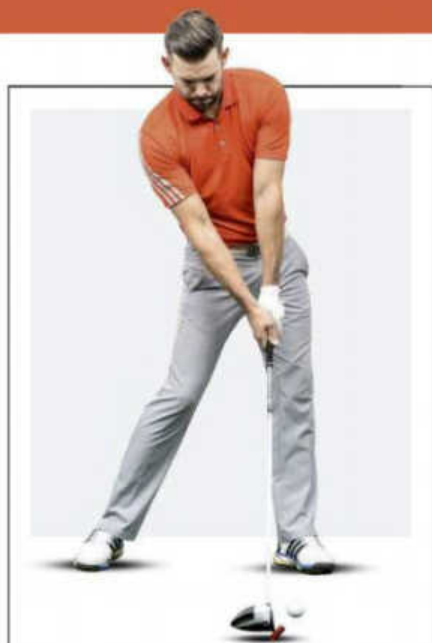
Derek says: "Wow! That is game-changing. I can't believe that such an incredible difference could be made in just 30 minutes. I can't wait to get back out on the course and see what difference it makes to my scores."

YOUR FIVE POWER SOURCES

Chris Ryan shares the crucial distance moves shared by every big hitter

WORDS DUNCAN LENNARD PICTURES BOB ATKINS

Scratch the surface of every power hitter on the planet and you will see the same five power sources exploited to the max, time and again. Here, I explain each one and show you how to make fuller use of it. If you want to gain a lot of distance quickly, work them into your technique now... and flummox your playing partners when the new season kicks off.



Impact: Head behind ball

This image shows how, with the head and shirt buttons behind the ball at impact, the clubhead meets the ball just into its upward arc, launching the ball powerfully upwards. It's the job of your set-up to preset this good impact, allowing you to keep your action simple.

POWER SOURCE #1 LAUNCH

We're fortunate to be playing the game in the era of the launch monitor, which has revealed so much to us about what happens when club meets ball. For driver power, we have learned how much distance can be gained from hitting up through the ball – a high launch, low-spin impact used by the game's longest hitters. Their set-up promotes such an impact – and you can, too.

Add tilt

Take your address position and posture; but then pull the club up and hold it against your chest, shaft running down your centre as shown. Drop your trail shoulder until the grip points at your lead heel. You've created perfect spinal tilt.



Hip bunt

Amplify the effect of that spinal tilt by pushing your hips a notch forwards, towards the target. This gets your set-up a little closer to the 'reverse K' feel which every effective impact position adopts, giving you less work to do in your swing.

Ball position forward

Play the ball opposite your left instep. The low point of the swing falls under the left or lead chest, so this position helps you create an impact with the clubhead slightly on the rise. That's perfect for a low-spinning, high launching tee shot.

Pressure, not weight

Note that despite the fullness of this turn, there is almost no lateral movement. Think of a good hip and shoulder in terms of promoting a pressure shift into your trailing side – not a weight shift – and it will help you build this full, strong position.

Trail knee can straighten

We've often also been told to retain the flex in the trail knee during the backswing. Again, this is a restrictive instruction that limits hip turn. Retaining knee flex is a question of flexibility; the key here is that if you need the knee to straighten to allow the hips and shoulders to turn, let it.

From the hip

Unless you're superhuman, you cannot make a big shoulder turn without the hips turning too. If you've been told to turn the shoulders against the hips, chances are your backswing is shorter than it can and should be. Turn your right toe out a little at set-up to encourage hip rotation.

POWER SOURCE #2 ROTATION

Long hitters all have one thing in common – a huge backswing shoulder turn. Viewing from face-on, you will inevitably see their trail shoulder appear past their head as they reach the top. Clearly, the more you wind up, the more space and time you create to build speed on the way down. The key to building shoulder turn is hip turn – a misunderstood part of the swing that we'll clarify here.



Feel and build hip turn

Place your driver across your hips. Push back with your trail hand, so the trail hip rotates up and back. Ensure there is no shift sideways, away from the target; and make sure the shaft stays in contact with your hip. Let your trail knee straighten if necessary; the goal is to feel the fuller hip rotation that permits a bigger turn.

POWER SOURCE #3 GRIP

How you place your lead or top hand on the handle of the club can massively influence the power you are able to create. Good positioning permits a full wrist cock that fires lag and snap into your action, like the crack of a whip. Poor positioning immobilises the wrists, and deadens your strike. Here's how to get it right.



Near the knuckle

Place the grip against your gloved hand, at a 45° angle. Position the handle so it runs opposite the knuckles of each finger, where the finger joins the hand. Take a grip and feel how this position puts the heel of the hand on top of the handle.



Cock sure

Now swing back until your lead arm is parallel to the ground. When the heel of the gloved hand is on top of the handle, your wrists are able to cock naturally, up against the thumbs, to form this L-shape between the lead arm and clubshaft. ➤

POWER SOURCE #4 SEQUENCE

A central difference between a long and short hitter is how they sequence motion from the top. The short hitter starts down with his upper body, typically creating an out-to-in, downward attack on the ball, with a premature wrist release... all of which sap power. The stronger player leads with his lower body. Here's why it's such a strong move – and a drill to help you achieve it.

DRILL: FEEL POWER



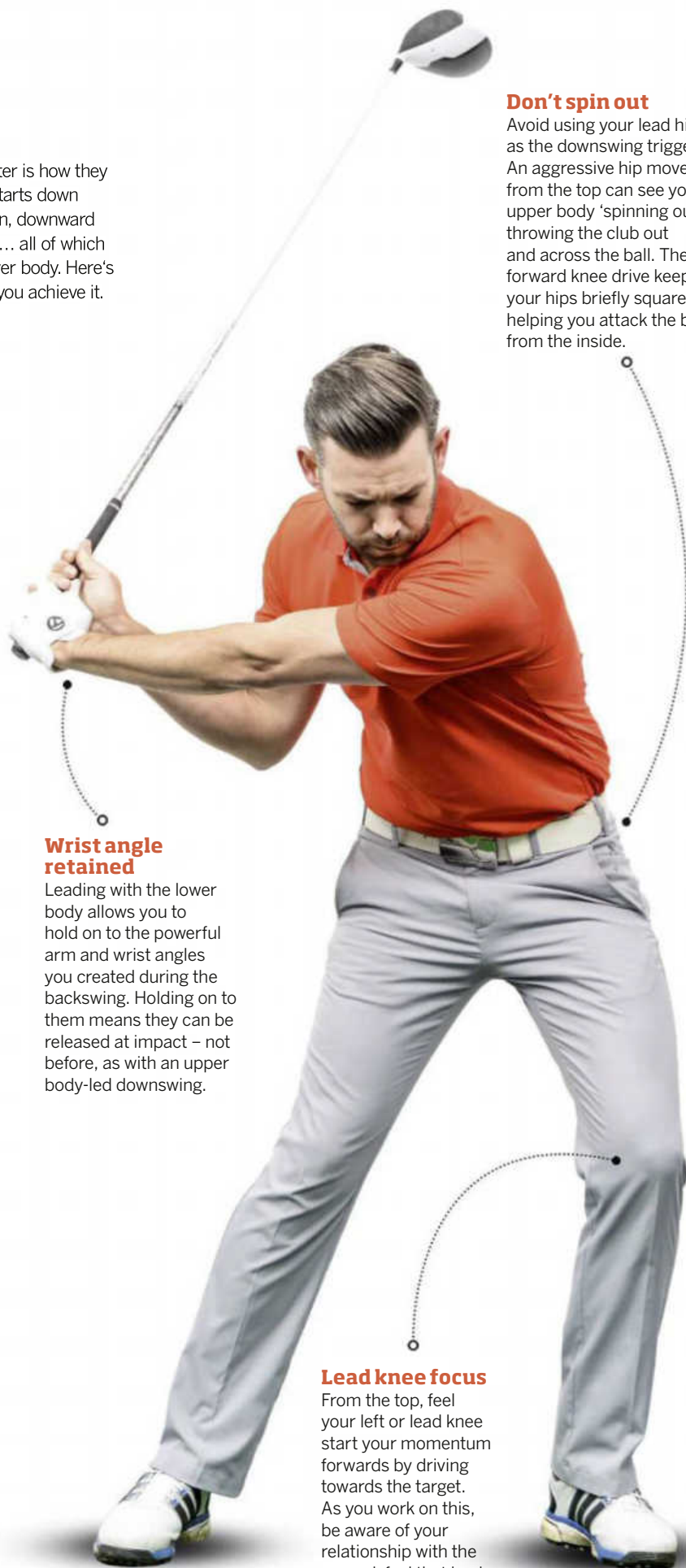
1 Start with feet together

Address the ball normally – then pull your lead foot back against your trail foot so the ankles touch. Make a three-quarter backswing from this position.



2 Plant the lead foot

Start your downswing by replanting your lead foot back to its original address position. Make the move purposeful and aggressive, almost a stamp. By getting some early momentum into your lower body, this drill helps you feel that lead knee should lead the downswing.



Don't spin out

Avoid using your lead hip as the downswing trigger. An aggressive hip move from the top can see your upper body 'spinning out', throwing the club out and across the ball. The forward knee drive keeps your hips briefly square, helping you attack the ball from the inside.

Wrist angle retained

Leading with the lower body allows you to hold on to the powerful arm and wrist angles you created during the backswing. Holding on to them means they can be released at impact – not before, as with an upper body-led downswing.

Lead knee focus

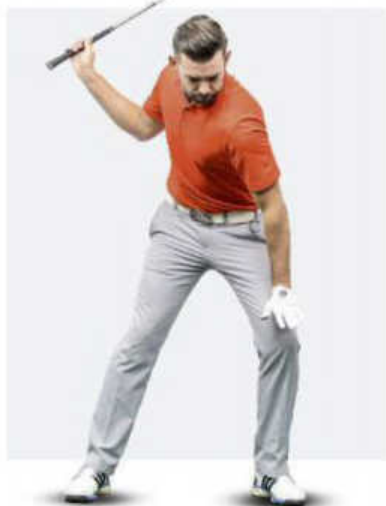
From the top, feel your left or lead knee start your momentum forwards by driving towards the target. As you work on this, be aware of your relationship with the ground; feel that back foot pressure shift to the front foot.

POWER SOURCE #5

SPEED

Watch the longest hitters in the game attack the golf ball and you will see the same thing every time – that while the club is moving towards the ball, pretty much everything else is moving away from it. Similar to a whip crack, there is a 'towards-then-away-from' aspect to the striking of the ball that fires great speed into the clubhead as it approaches the ball. It's not the easiest concept to grasp, but a simple drill will help.

DRILL: BUILD SPEED



1 Feel 'heavy'...

Swing back with your trail hand only. Now start your downswing with the lead knee. Pause this first-move-down position, and place your gloved hand on your lead thigh to feel weight and pressure down through your front foot.



2... then feel 'light'

Switch the club to your gloved hand. From that squatted, 'heavy' position, use your trail hand to help push your lead shoulder up and away from the ball. The faster you can learn to do this, the more clubhead speed you will build.

Lead shoulder rises

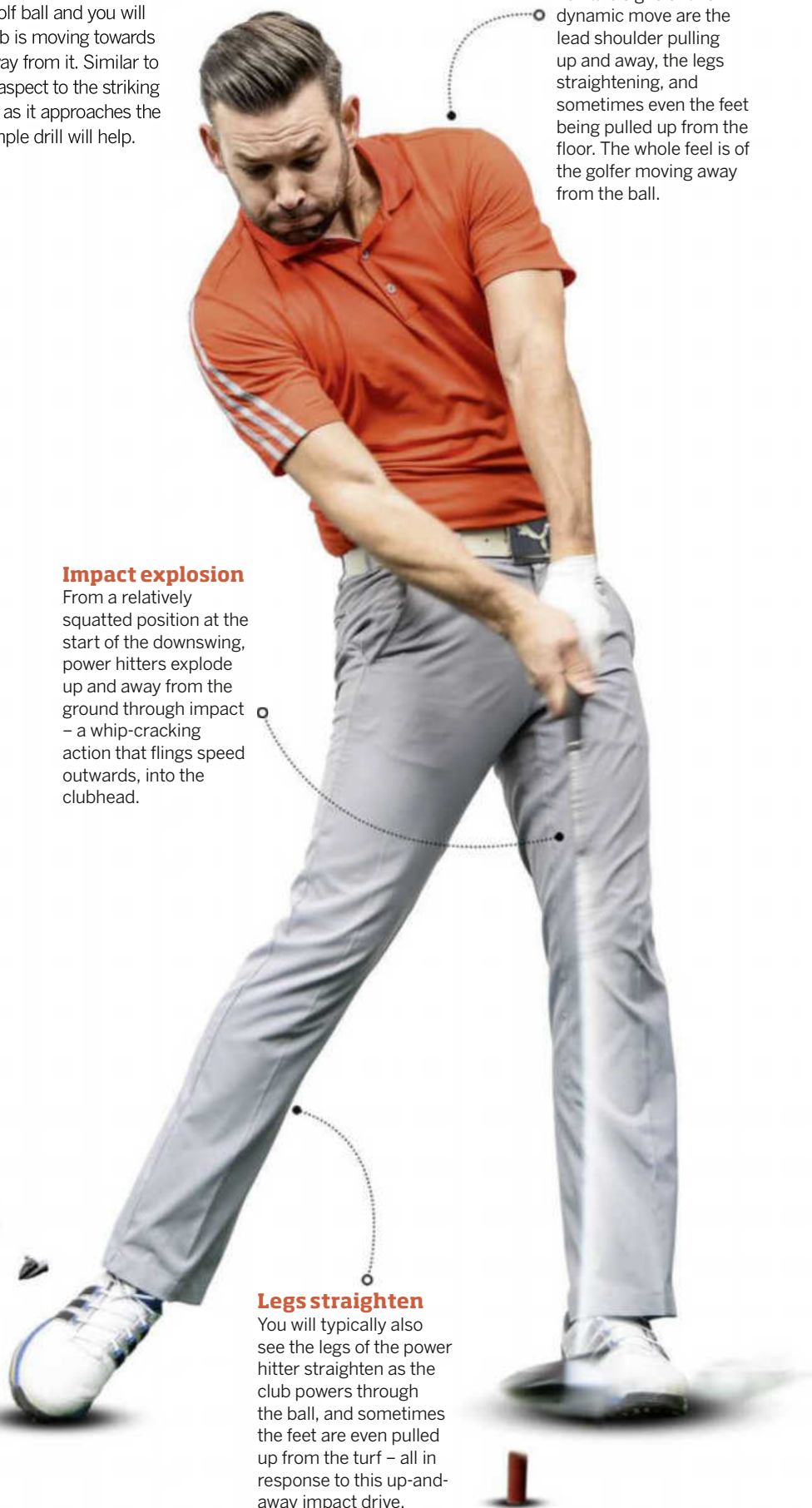
Tell-tale signs of this dynamic move are the lead shoulder pulling up and away, the legs straightening, and sometimes even the feet being pulled up from the floor. The whole feel is of the golfer moving away from the ball.

Impact explosion

From a relatively squatted position at the start of the downswing, power hitters explode up and away from the ground through impact – a whip-cracking action that flings speed outwards, into the clubhead.

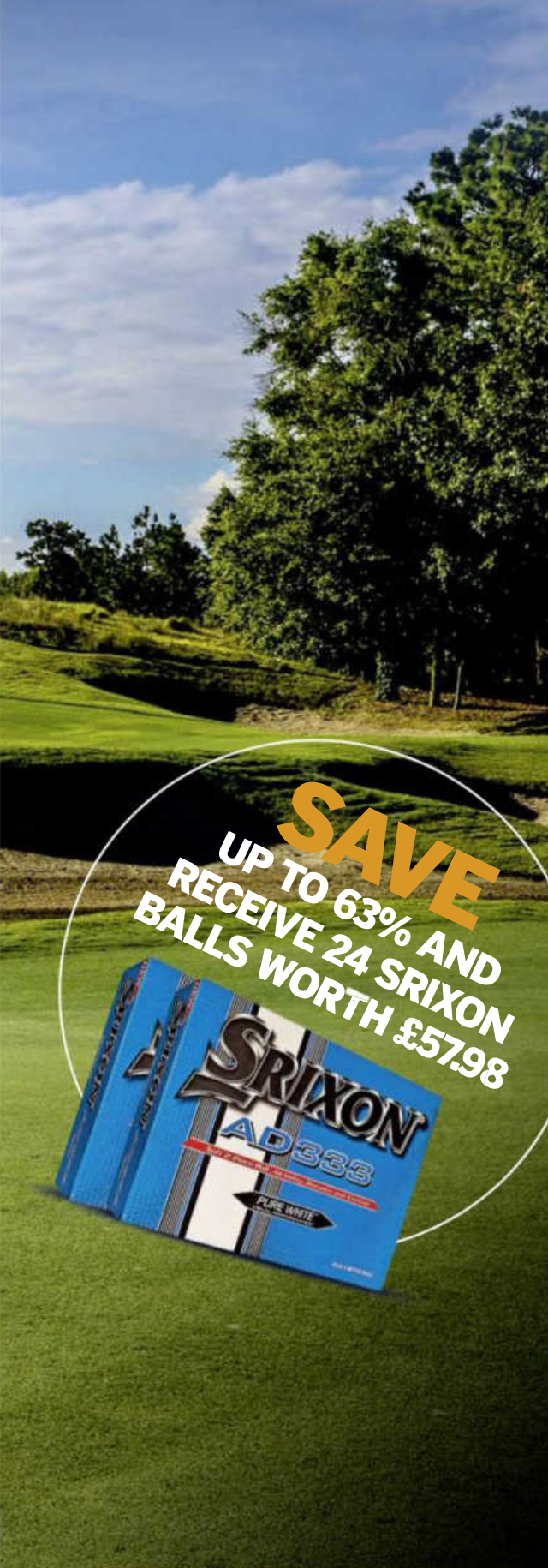
Legs straighten

You will typically also see the legs of the power hitter straighten as the club powers through the ball, and sometimes the feet are even pulled up from the turf – all in response to this up-and-away impact drive.



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Buckinghamshire's iconic Stoke Park Country Club, Spa & Hotel is one of just two five-AA Red Star golf clubs in England. The course itself unfurls grandly across 300 acres of mid-19th century, Capability Brown-landscaped parkland featuring lakes and monuments.

The lucky prize draw winner and friend will soon be sampling its many on and off-course delights in the form of a two-night break with two rounds of golf on the classic Harry Colt-designed course which opened in 1908.

Just 35 minutes from London and seven miles from Heathrow Airport, Stoke Park offers 49 luxury bedrooms and suites plus three restaurants, bars and lounges – including the three AA-star Humphry's (above right). It provides a unique combination of the traditions of an exclusive members' club and the best of today's sporting, leisure, entertaining and hotel facilities.

The historic course played host to the PGA



Matchplay in 1910 and, even more famously, the golf match between Sean Connery's James Bond and Auric Goldfinger, in the 1964 film. Several other major movies were filmed at Stoke Park including *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997), and *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001) while the resort also featured in three 2004 movies (*Wimbledon*, *Bride & Prejudice* and Matthew Vaughn's *Layer Cake*).

Among the resort's 27 holes, the signature is the magnificent par-3 7th, the inspiration for the original 16th at Augusta National,

home of the US Masters, created by Alister MacKenzie who had worked at Stoke Park alongside Colt. It is a classic hole among many on the three nines (Colt, Alison and Lane Jackson).

The resort also boasts a sumptuous spa with 11 treatment rooms, and world-class tennis facilities with 13 courts (indoor, artificial clay and grass): Stoke Park annually stages the pre-Wimbledon Boodles Championship and the reigning champion is World no.1 Novak Djokovic.

● For more information call 01753 717171 or visit www.stokepark.com

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Practice made perfect

Put your practice time to best use by working on your game on the course as well as the range

WORDS DAVID BROOKS PICTURES BOB ATKINS

For most club golfers, the range is where you practise the game, and the course is where you play it. The differences between these can put golfers at a disadvantage compared to other sports players. Most sports are practised in an environment very similar to where they are played, helping participants make their learning more transferable to competitive play.

This is not to say the range is a bad place to practise; used wisely, it can make a big contribution to improving your game, and I'll show you how here. But when you know when and how to use the course too, you can really start to see progress. In this article we will address both areas; but note that underlying both practice arenas is a theme of making your practice a little less comfortable. It's only natural to want to hit good shots; but genuine progress comes from pulling yourself out of your comfort zone, and engaging in practice which is enjoyable but always challenging. ➔



Range work: when to use it, and when not to



The range offers a safe place to work on your swing, but it is insulated from the challenges of the game itself.

Range pros

■ Safe environment

The range allows you to hit shots with little or no consequence, in a pressure-free environment. It feels safe, and because of this, it is a great place to work when your game feels vulnerable – for example when you're trying to groove a new move, or your general confidence is low.

■ Consistent testing ground

The range also lets you hit the same shot again and again. This makes it ideal for monitoring consistency of technique, but it also helps assess how changing your action affects the ball flight. Using feedback like this to monitor your action is a foundation for technique building.

Range cons

■ Hitting shots is too easy

On the range, you're giving yourself

a nice lie and a level stance and 50 pressure-free goes to hit to the widest fairway imaginable. In other words, you're making practice easier and less varied than the game itself. That makes a genuine learning environment for skill harder to create, and leads to a sense of intimidation on the first tee.

■ Your shots are removed from playing the game

Hitting balls one after the other creates an opportunity to find a rhythm that is denied you on the course. The lack of consequence to poor shots puts you in a completely different state of mind to when you're on the course. And there is no need to strategise or problem-solve, which are intrinsic parts of on-course play.

■ Summing up

Use the range to work on technique and to improve your awareness of cause and effect; but work harder to make your shots more relevant to on-course play.

TG TOP 50

DAVID BROOKS
THE WARREN, ESSEX



UKCC Level 4 coach and an England Golf Regional Coach for the West Midlands.

How to use the range

Range work can turn us into machines, dragging the next ball into position and firing it off without any thought. Instead, break the process up and treat each shot as a separate event. Not only does that simulate what you need on the course; it allows you to get more out of each shot.

2 Use your routines

Go through your pre-shot routine for every shot to find a hitting rhythm which feels in tune with how you prepare on course. Include rehearsal swings and visualisation.



Vary your target

Pick three target zones, and hit to a different one with each shot. This forces you into the discipline of taking an alignment to a target, just as you need to on the course. If you're on a mat, don't let it line you up – hit across it.

Work on distance, not just line

Pick target zones that are just as demanding for length as line. Again, this matches the challenge you face on the course.

Keep the balls away

Leaving the basket of balls a couple of yards away forces you to move away and re-address for every shot – and that helps you employ on-course discipline.

1 Vary your club

Constantly change clubs – even on every shot. It mimics what you do on the course and trains you to switch focus. Imagine you are playing your front nine.



Course Practice when to use it, and when not to

Practising on the course is often frowned on, but a single golfer playing four balls is only as much wear as one fourball going through. It's best to get permission first, and as long as you treat the course with respect it shouldn't be a problem.

Course pros

■ The right context

While the jury is out on how easy it is to take range work to the course, work done on the course itself is much more easily assimilated into your game. Every shot you hit is in the environment you play, which makes the skills you learn more familiar to you during the round, and more easily called upon.

■ Consequence added

On the course, you pay a penalty for your bad shots. This introduces the important element of consequence, which creates the pressure you have to deal with in every competitive round. Practising with consequence toughens you up to that pressure.

Course cons

■ Limited shots

You can't hit as many balls, which makes drumming a new move into your technique harder to accomplish. It also makes limited practice time feel inefficient. The constantly changing environment also makes it harder to pinpoint the route cause of an errant shot shape.

■ Outcome focus

Among the hazards, trees and out-of-bounds, you will inevitably become a little more focused on the result of the shot. While that's a plus in terms of adding consequence to your shots, it makes things harder if you are looking to build trust in a new technique.

■ Summing up

A round of golf is finding the technique and attitude to deal with a series of challenges presented to you. Use on-course practice to boost your adaptability, both of swing and strategy.

Fresh challenges

On-course work can help you learn how to vary your technique to deal with your situation. Round the green, constantly change the club and the lie to promote this.



How to use the course

Effective on-course practice challenges you to think and adds elements of pressure and consequence. It also fires your creativity and it's surely no coincidence that Bubba Watson –

one of the most creative golfers ever – learned the game on the course, and only used the range to loosen up. Try these games, designed to work your brain... and your nerve.



Second-ball pressure

In Two-ball worst ball, if you hit a good first shot there is huge pressure on the second. This is a great game to build resilience.

North, East, South, West

Scatter four balls around the green, long, short, left and right. Go round the green, playing each shot. Either see how many you can get up and down, or simply measure how many you can get within a

set distance. This game challenges you to make decisions, weigh up the shot and come up with a solution. As you improve at this game, repeat it from the four hardest positions you can find; it'll really sharpen your scrambling.

Two-ball worst ball

Play two balls off the tee, then play two balls from where the worst drive ended... and so on, to the green. A truly gruelling game, this develops scrambling and scoring skills.



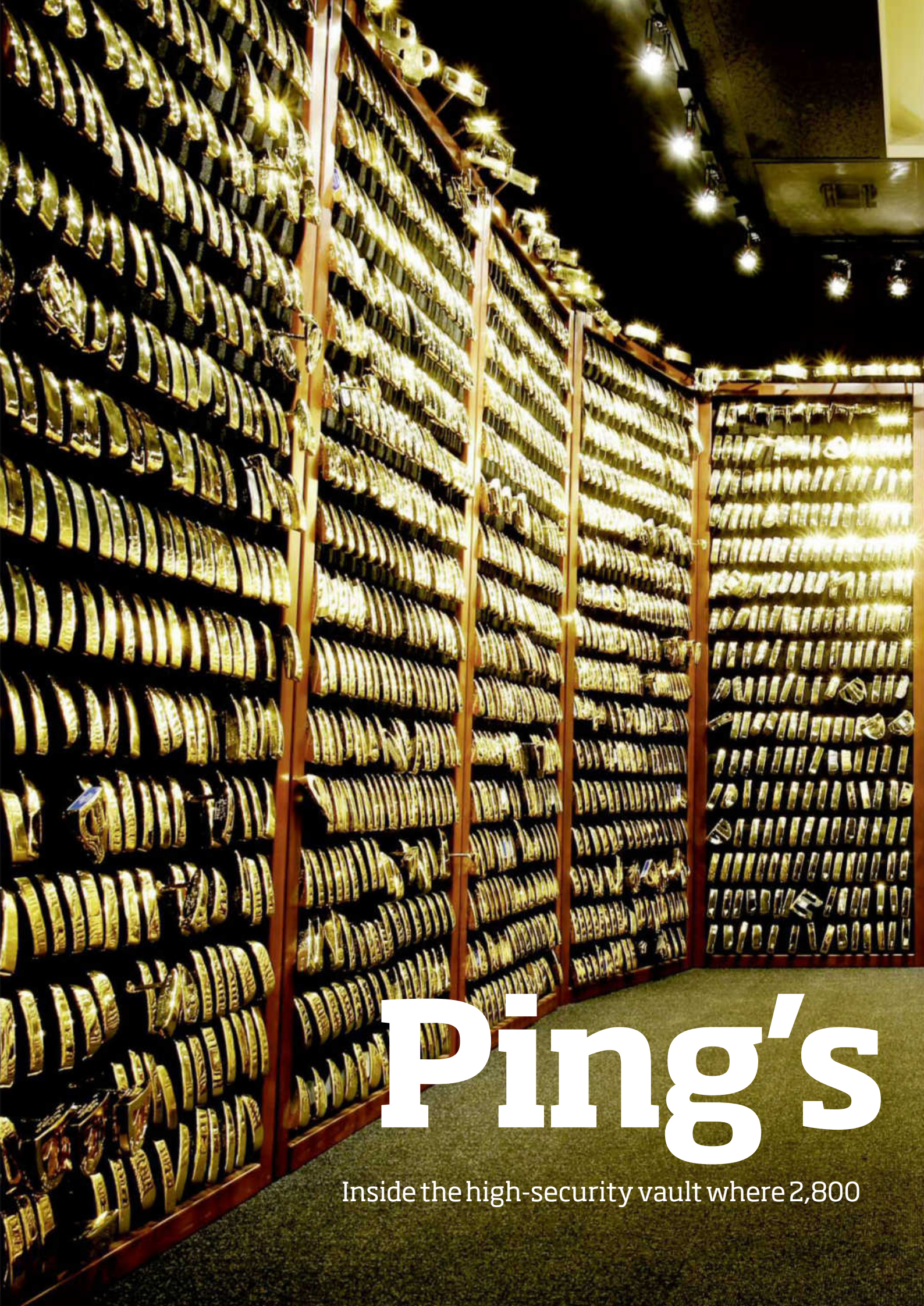
Vary your approaches

As you walk up the fairway, pause to hit in shots from 200, 180, 160 and 140 yards. Alter your lie, stance and line for each. On-course practice is about getting your brain working on constantly changing challenges, and this is a great game to hone that ability.




Find that awkward pitch

All golfers have pitching distances they like and ones they don't – even Luke Donald. Where Donald differs to many club golfers is he will deliberately practise the distances he doesn't like. Doing so, he argues, makes his game complete and improves his confidence. So on each hole, seek out that distance you hate and hit an extra approach from this length.



Ping's

Inside the high-security vault where 2,800

A photograph of a museum exhibit featuring a large, curved wall display of numerous gold putters. The putters are arranged in rows, with some standing upright and others lying flat. The display is illuminated by spotlights, creating a warm, golden glow. The putters vary in design, some featuring intricate engravings and logos. The background is dark, making the gold putters stand out prominently.

WORDS SIMON DADDOW
PICTURES ANGUS MURRAY

bling

gold putters commemorate tour victories



Secret door
Only five people
know the code.

Putters are very collectable, and most of us have more than one tucked away in the garage. But no-one has a collection quite like Ping. It's so big, it is housed in its own vault. It contains a replica of every Ping putter used to win a tour event since the company was founded in 1959. And each one is coated in gold.

Ping founder Karsten Solheim hit upon the idea in the 1960s, when he wanted to recognise a tour player's achievement in winning an event using one of his flatsticks.

He felt just a cheque wasn't personal enough and didn't mean anything once it had been banked. So he decided that when one of his players won, he'd make two exact copies of the winning putter. He engraved both with the player's name, the event and year and have them gold plated. He gave one to the player and kept the other for himself. Now, 57 years on, his collection runs to some 2,830 clubs that all have their own story to tell.

"It's one of the coolest things in professional sports," says six-time PGA Tour winner Hunter Mahan. "After a win, you're usually thinking about getting to go to the Masters and everything that usually comes with a victory. But then you realise you get a gold putter as well. Usually they give it to you some time after the win, so when you get it, it brings back good memories from the week. Getting to see your name and tournament win engraved on the face gives it a personal touch that I really like. It's just so unique."

When players started winning majors using Ping putters Karsten thought it needed something extra special to mark the occasion. So he started to make a solid gold version of those putters. Today, 61 majors down and at a cost of \$20,000-\$30,000 each, it's fair to say Ping believes in rewarding those pros who choose to play their equipment.

Bubba Watson received a solid gold Ping Anser 1 Milled for winning the 2014 Masters. It



Racked up
All 2,800 putters
are arranged in
alphabetical order
in the vault.

'It's one of the coolest things in professional sports - it brings back so many memories'

had a head weight of 24.7 ounces and was valued at roughly \$30,000. "As a kid, I heard about the gold putter vault," Watson said. "I knew it was something cool that you wanted to see. The history of Karsten Solheim and him making the putter, you think about all that and the wins - it's something you want to see and be a part of. You want to have at least one putter or a wedge in here, so it's pretty neat to be associated with it now."

Karsten also believed it was important to recognise key milestones in a player's career. So special shots with Ping irons and wedges have also been given the gold treatment.

There's the wedge that Bubba Watson curved from the trees to win the 2012 Masters; the Eye 2-iron Mark Calcavecchia hit from a fairway bunker at the 1989 Open at Troon; and the 4-iron Louis Oosthuizen holed with for an albatross two on the second at Augusta.

Ping says each gold-plated putter in the vault comes in at about \$600 a pop and they insist on using white cotton gloves to handle each one. The vault has its own keeper, a reinforced safe-style door and requires a code to enter (which is only known by five Ping employees). It's an incredible place - and we were given an exclusive look inside it.

THE VAULT IN NUMBERS

59 Lee Westwood has more gold putters in the vault than anyone else. Interestingly his winning models range between blades, mallets and MOI style heads.

46 Number of putters Seve has in the vault. He was the only player to use one in a tournament.

22 Major wins for Ping's Anser, which celebrates its 50th Anniversary in 2016.



Six golden moments

Just some of the highlights we found in Ping's putter vault



Suzann Pettersen The most expensive putter in the vault is the Doc 15 that Pettersen used to win the LPGA Championship in 2007... it's worth \$30,000.



Bubba Watson Ping plated the 52° Tour-W wedge Watson used to hit a miraculous 40-yard hook from the pine straw to win his first Masters in 2012.



Seve Ballesteros He's got 46 putters in the vault for tour, major and Ryder Cup victories. The Anser is the commonest model, with 33 majors to its name.



John Daly One legend, along with Nick Faldo, Greg Norman, Tom Watson, Payne Stewart and Lee Trevino, in the vault with at least one major title.



Louis Oosthuizen His albatross with this S56 4-iron on the second hole at the 2012 Masters (from 253 yards!) was one of the best shots ever at Augusta.



Tiger Woods Tiger won his third US Amateur Championship in 1995 using an Anser 2. Ping sees the title as important enough to deserve a gold putter.

1 Vault keeper. It's Leza Clarke's full-time job to look after the vault, document its contents and order new gold putters after every Ping player's victory.

61 Major victories, including 18 Open Championships, 14 PGA Championships, 13 Masters, 13 US Opens, two Champions Tour majors and a Women's US Open.

1 Player has a putter for an event he *didn't* win. Hunter Mahan led 2013's Canadian Open when his wife went into labour. He withdrew, but two putters were made to celebrate.

69 The name of the first Ping putter to win on tour and go in the vault. Its owner was John Barnum, who claimed the 1962 Cajun Classic.



'I had my one and only hole-in-one a few days after I won *Strictly*. I should have bought a Lottery ticket that week'



MY LIFE IN GOLF

Chris Hollins

The sports anchor, former *Strictly* champ and six handicapper on playing with Rory, putting at Augusta and foiling slow play

WORDS KEVIN BROWN PICTURES JAMES CHEADLE

Chris Hollins first appeared in most of our living rooms as the sports correspondent for BBC Breakfast – a post he held until 2012. However, the 44-year-old's profile rocketed in 2009 when he claimed the coveted *Strictly Come Dancing* title with professional partner Ola Jordan. Since then he's virtually been ever-present on TV, presenting such shows as *Cash in the Attic*, *Real Rescues*, *Food Inspectors* and consumer affairs programme *Watchdog*.

But now he's back with sport, presenting for BT Sport Live on their Champions League and Premier League coverage. He stresses: "Any live TV is brilliant and I'd love to get into social history programmes and more sports." One of those, no doubt is golf – for which he has a passion.

I started playing golf aged 16 or 17 but I played a lot of cricket so didn't have much time for it. It was only when I started at the BBC doing early and late shifts when I was 23 or 24, that I really picked it up. Now I can't stop; it's addictive.

I'm the president at The Oxfordshire GC where I play most of my golf though I also play a bit at Pennard, south Wales, a nice little links course overlooked by a 13th century castle... and anywhere else that will have me.

Normally my long game is solid but is backed up by a terrible short game. But now it's the other way round. That's golf I suppose, though I think you've got to have that 'it beats working attitude'. My main golfing ambition is to finish level or below par for a round. So far my best ever round is +1 at The Oxfordshire which is a very tough course. I'd have to say,

Things you didn't know

- He began his career at Sky Sports in 1994, followed by spells at Channel One, GMTV, Meridian and Channel 5.
- His father is John Hollins MBE, the former Chelsea, Arsenal, QPR and England midfielder.
- Chris was a pretty useful footballer himself and in fact played for QPR and Aldershot – he took part in Sky One's *The Match*, playing a full 90 minutes on the celebrity side.
- He made a cameo in the feature film *Run Fat Boy Run* and also featured in BBC One's *Celebrity MasterChef*.
- He played a key role in the Beeb's London Olympic coverage in 2012 when he was back on the breakfast sofa co-hosting Olympic Breakfast.

though, that just now I seem to be getting further and further away from achieving that.

In my golfing life I've been lucky to have played with the likes of Rory McIlroy, Tom Watson, Gary Player, Padraig Harrington and Darren Clarke – admittedly just one or two holes with some of them – so down the years I've not been short of tips to improve my game. Somebody always has a tip or two to give you but the trouble is when you stand over the ball you've got 900 tips running round in your head!

I've had some great times on golf courses around the world and have even had a putt at Augusta National, on the 16th green in 2006 when covering the Masters for the BBC. I've been lucky too to play some of the best courses including Wentworth, Sunningdale and St Andrews. But Turnberry is one of my favourite places. I do like links courses.

Golfers are a different breed and the majority have unrealistic aspirations. What amuses the pros most is seeing somebody shank their tee shot into the bushes 100 yards away and then see the same player, with a terrible lie and no backswing, try and emulate the late great Seve Ballesteros by attempting to pull off the most miraculous of recovery shots...

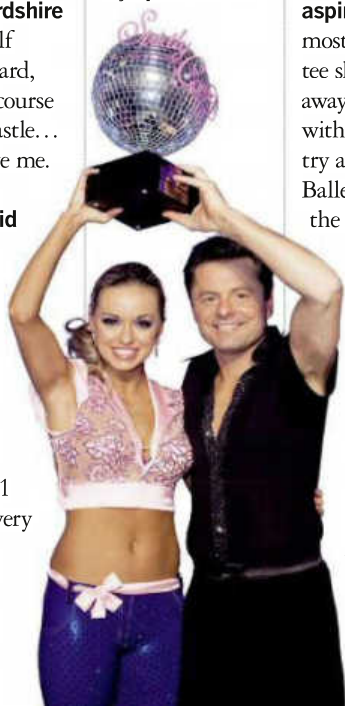
I've been to a lot of golf tournaments which I've worked on. It can be a bit like a busman's holiday, but my favourite sporting event is The Open Championship. If someone told me I could only attend one single event per year it would have to be The Open.

I've had one hole-in-one, on the 5th hole at Pennard which came when playing with my dad a week after I won *Strictly Come Dancing* in 2009. It was hilarious, and after the week I'd had I should have got a Lottery ticket! Dad is a keen player too, and we play a lot together but you have to be in the right mood family-wise otherwise everybody can fall out.

I've enjoyed playing in the Celebrity Cup at Celtic Manor and in several Pro-Ams, the best being the BMW Pro-Am at Wentworth. I played with Rory (McIlroy) one year which was great. He had just lost the Masters when he had that infamous capitulation but he was great company and fun. It's all very nerve-racking though but not so bad when you're playing well. When you've got a bit of self-doubt and are thinking you might shank the next one into the crowd – you can virtually hear them breathe – it's a different ball game. If you're thinking along those lines, it's going to be a disaster isn't it?

My dream fourball would include Jack Nicklaus, Arnie Palmer and Tom Watson but if it was for a spot of banter I'd have Rory on my side with tennis legend John McEnroe. I'd love to get Tiger out there to find out what the hell has been going on.

As for changes to the game, all I will say is... speed it up! Watching it on telly can be dreadful. I also wonder if ball technology has literally gone too far and whether we need to rein it back because some courses are becoming redundant. I'd love to see a tournament played with old wooden heads or blades. Modern technology makes me look a top player though I'd struggle with those old woods!



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New Gear

LATEST KIT REVEALED,
REVIEWED & RATED

EDITED BY SIMON DADDOW

Mizuno debuts JPX EZ range

Forgiveness and feel
are its hallmarks **Page 90**

Rickie Fowler's Cobra verdict

Why he put the King
Ltd into his bag **Page 94**

Has Ping invented a whole new club category?

First look at the iron-wood
'Crossover' **Page 84**

NEW
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Ping G family	82
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More air power

Callaway and Ping reveal their most
aerodynamic drivers ever **Page 82**

Turbulator bonus

Ping say they've improved the turbulator technology on the previous G30 model by increasing its size and refining its position. Inspired by 'tails' on the back of vehicles, 'VorTec Technology' reduces turbulent airflow to improve stability and cut drag by 11 per cent.

PING

Add more GForce

One of the modern era's best-selling series gets an awesome upgrade...

Ping's G Series has regularly been among the 'most sold' driver and irons in the game since the G2 launched in 2004. The G series has won Majors, been in the hands of the world's No.1 player and brought game-improving technology to millions across the globe. After seven G families, Ping are reverting to just 'G' for 2016 and we reckon it's among the best-looking gear the company's ever made.

With the tight rules on golf equipment, some of us scoff at manufacturers' claims as to the benefits of their new technology. But Ping insist they've broken down every conceivable contributor to a driver's distance and forgiveness potential (the list runs to 56 points) to end up with significant gains. So what's new?

● **Details:** Driver: RRP £349, Lofts: 9°, 10.5°, 10° SFT, 12° SFT, 9° LST, 10.5° LST. www.ping.com

There's also a G SF-Tec and LS-Tec driver...

The G isn't just limited to a single head either. There's an LS Tec head (in 9° and 10.5°) which lowers spin by about 400rpm and a SF Tec head (in 10° and 12°) which has 12 yards of shot bend correction technology to help straighten out a slice.



NEW
GEAR
SPECIAL
2016

Vortex shredder

Ping are an engineering company and the top brass and feel that due to the constraints that rules place on equipment manufacturers, aerodynamics offer the most significant area for improved performance. With 'VorTec Technology', their boffins like to say you are getting speed for free.



We've hit it!

I was lucky enough to hit the new G at Ping's HQ in Phoenix, Arizona, and I was very impressed. The sound is more solid than the G30 which was quite loud. I also really like the new shaping, which is not quite as squashed and wide as the G30. Don't have any reservations on the 'busy-ness' of the crown design – it really helps to focus attention on the ball at address.

Dragon Fly Crown

Ping CEO and chairman John Solheim was inspired by a picture he took of a dragon fly. His image showed the insect's intricate wing structure beautifully and led him to ask his engineers if a similar vein pattern could strengthen a driver crown. It's taken three years to develop but the idea has shaved 8g of weight from the crown and means areas of the crown are the thickness of only three pieces of paper!



G fairway, £220 G hybrid, £180

The new G fairways and hybrids have significant updates too, which can be divided up into several categories:

● Lower leading edge

Struggle to launch shots off short grass with fairway woods? Ping engineers have lowered the leading edge to effectively raise the impact position on the face by 12 per cent to help get the ball airborne.

● Cascading sole

Ping's 'internal cascading' sole is designed to engage more of the structure in the bending process. For you that means faster ball speeds.

● Carpenter Steel Face

A clubface enduring lots of flexing stress and Carpenter 455 steel is 25 per cent stronger than the 17-4 SS used in the rest of the G's head.

● Thin crown with Turbulators

The G's fairway crown is 25 per cent thinner than the G30's, freeing up 7g to improve MOI. You'll also now find turbulators on the hybrid's crown.

● Stretch Body and SF Tec Fairway

Mini drivers are ideal on tight tee shots and the G Stretch fairway has a body that's 15cc larger than standard with CG further forward. An SF Tec fairway – with its more heel-sided CG – will help slicers.

● **Details:** Fairway – Lofts Stretch 3, 3, 5, 7, 3 SFT, 5 SFT. G hybrid – Lofts: 17°, 19°, 22°, 26°, 30°.

For Ping video reviews, visit www.todaysgolfer.co.uk

PING

Style as well as help

The new G iron by Ping smashes the 'ugly duckling' jibe

Whether you love Ping or are indifferent to the brand, you've got to admit their irons are always functional – even if they haven't always topped the pile when it comes to beauty. But even if you must have super sexy irons, we reckon you'll love the new G. It's a wolf in sheep's clothing. A full-out game-improvement iron but disguised as a sleeker, slimmer super model... who said game-improvement irons had to be ugly ducklings? Intrigued? This is what they've changed from G30.

● **Details:** G and GMax (4-9, PW, UW, SW, LW) – RRP £92 per club (g), £104 per club (G).



A shaft idea we love!

Ping have a new shaft for the new G iron head. They've teamed with top Japanese manufacturer Nippon to create an 'Ascending Weight' shaft. Shafts in longer irons are lighter to allow you to launch shots easier. It is also closer to the weight of your hybrids, fairways and driver so there's a smoother progression from those to long irons. Short-iron shafts get heavier to aid control and match the weights of your wedges much more closely.

ALL-NEW CATEGORY

Crossover... is this really a new club?

It's not a driving iron but gives hybrid-like forgiveness and iron-esque spin

It's not every day that golf companies claim to invent a new product category, and when they do we usually greet the statement with a good deal of scepticism.

But Ping's lead engineer Marty Jertson is very convincing when he insists "The Crossover is not a driving iron... it delivers hybrid-like launch and distance but with the spin of an iron."

So the Crossover is aimed at golfers that either don't like hybrids or those

wanting the option of being able to hit it high or low shots on command – particularly useful in the wind.

So, how does it do it?

Iron styling with Carpenter Steel 455 face

Ping have taken the high-strength steel used in their fairway and hybrid faces and created the G Crossover around it. Which means increased ball speeds as the face is machined thinner to

maximise bending. There's also a wide-body construction to increase playability.

Extreme Toe Weighting

Ping say a large weight pad in the toe helps reposition the centre of gravity and expands perimeter weighting. Ping also point out the MOI of the G is 31 per cent higher than the Rapture driving iron, which is hugely significant. If we compare spin, the Crossover generates more than a 4-iron but less than a



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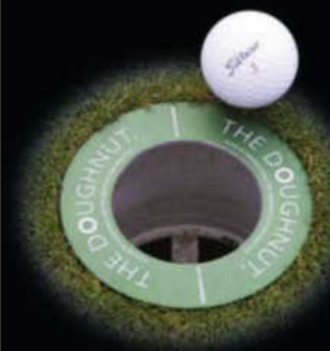
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Cor-Eye Technology

Ping used Cor-Eye on their GMAX iron that launched last summer. It helps by allowing the clubface to act like a springboard and flex at impact.

Ping say the "eye" helps power shots an average of five yards further than with the G30. The clubface is also 32 per cent thinner than the previous G30 model and four times more 'springy'.

Hyper 17-4 Stainless Steel

You can't create a flexible iron face without using fancy metals; standard steels are just not up to the job. Ping have found a way to heat treat the G's 17-4 SS heads, including baking them at 1040°C in a vacuum furnace to align grain structure. The heads are then cooled for four hours at 550° to strengthen the material. Ping call the process 'Hyper 17-SS'.

We've hit it!

Ping's game improvement irons have had some pretty big chunky heads in the past but that's all changed with the G. Its cosmetics are a real improvement over any G series iron. The top line's contoured to look smaller, the offset sole looks less pronounced and the mid sole width is spot on for its wide target audience.

Concealed weight port

Game-improvement irons used to have weight at the bottom of the cavity to help shots airborne, but thinking has changed. The area that was metal now needs to be space to let the face flex. So Ping have uncoupled their usual tuning port (allows lots of weight options) from the face, so the face can flex into the space and also to improve MOI for extra forgiveness.

hybrid, making ballooned shots less likely. And looking at ball speed, the Crossover's higher than a 4-iron but less than a hybrid, yet launch angle between the three is pretty similar.

Tiered internal sole

To squeeze out every last drop of juice from your swing, Ping have incorporated an internal tiered sole which allows the Crossover's head to deform at impact and rebound quicker. Effectively meaning you harness extra energy no matter where you impact the clubface.

● **Details:** RRP £180. Lofts: 3 (18°), 4 (21°), 5 (24°).



CALLAWAY

Ready for take off

Callaway have teamed up with aircraft giants Boeing to produce the most aerodynamic driver in their history

If you want to make something go faster through the air, who do you turn to for advice? When Callaway pondered that question, there was only one answer: Boeing. The companies formed a partnership and this is the result – Callaway's most aerodynamic driver ever. The XR 16 and XR 16 Pro feature a raft of new tech designed to help you squeeze every ounce of clubhead speed from your swing. What's more, the OptiFit hosel offers eight possible loft and lie combinations.

Callaway's R&D chief Alan Hocknell told TG: "We worked with Boeing to redefine what's possible with ball speed.

"We engineered our most forgiving shape ever and Boeing made it fast with advanced aerodynamics and a redesigned Speed Step Crown. This thing is big and fast like you wouldn't believe. We've tried to turn as much power from the golfer into head speed as we could."

● **Details:** RRP £289, £329 Pro. Available in 9°, 10.5°, 13.5° (Pro 9°, 10.5°).



There's a Pro version

The Pro version benefits from aero tech, too, but it has a 450cc head and a more neutral centre of gravity location. Callaway says it provides the distance and forgiveness of the XR16, in a smaller package that better players prefer.



Boeing's aero package

Callaway's work with Boeing has yielded a very different clubhead design to last year's popular XR. The head is longer and shallower, there are ridges along the bottom to improve airflow at the back of the club and a redesigned Speed Step on the crown to yield better airflow over the top of it. The result is 30 per cent less drag from the crown and 10 per cent less drag from the face, resulting in 2mph more head speed than the XR.



More forgiveness

Compared to last year's XR, the 16 has a larger shape for more inertia, a stretched-out crown with a bigger footprint and a centre of gravity that's lower and deeper. The body is built with lighter titanium so it now weighs just 310g – so is easier to swing fast.



Faster face

Callaway's RMOTO face (which means ribs for motion control) uses hidden ribs to connect the face, sole, face and crown to improve ball speeds particularly on shots hit off-centre. For 2016 it's lighter and thinner than before, and made from a stronger titanium. The result, Callaway says, is more speed.

We've hit it!

We were among the very first to hit the XR 16. First impressions? A handsome club that looks huge behind the ball. The matt crown oozes quality and the Speed Step Crown aids alignment. Crucially, the whole aero package was 3mph faster than my current driver. Tour star Marc Warren put it straight in his bag after hitting one 311 yards.

Q&A



Jeffrey Crouch

Senior Technical Fellow, Boeing

● Why Callaway?

We believe cross-industry collaboration is beneficial to all involved. I thought it would be cool to learn about the physics of golf and to have a chance to apply my knowledge to help improve a driver.

● Can aircraft tech really help?

Reducing drag and controlling the flow to achieve the most efficient aerodynamic performance is a critical part of airplane design. Those same principles applied to this project. The speed and size of the club are more like a wind-tunnel model than a full-scale plane, so wind-tunnel test techniques are also helpful.

● Were there any challenges?

An aircraft moves through space with relatively slow changes in orientation; a driver moves with rapid changes in orientation. So, any aerodynamic improvements must be effective over a wide range of flow conditions.

● You've lost us! What is 'flow'?

One of the things I work on at Boeing is laminar flow control, which seeks to delay turbulence and increase laminar flow on aerodynamic surfaces. This reduces plane drag and leads to reduced fuel consumption and lower emissions. For a driver, because of its shape we wanted to trigger turbulence in order to reduce drag and increase head speed.

● How did Boeing help specifically?

Boeing helped with flow modifiers or trip steps; specifically the location and sizing of the trip step to help reduce drag from the top of the swing through impact with the ball.



For exclusive videos and more tech details of the XR drivers, visit www.todaysgolfer.co.uk



Hybrids make up the set

Specifically-designed hybrids (below right) can replace irons for the ever-growing numbers of players who need that help.

Built for distance

Already in Big Bertha, Apex and XR irons, the 360° Cup Face allows for a larger, unsupported face, and faster ball speeds over a bigger area. A new heat treatment raises ball speed further.

Tons of forgiveness

The centre of gravity is lower and further back than in other XR irons, so it is easier to get the ball in the air. The soles are also wider for more forgiveness. Progressive lengths and lofts equal more carry distance from each club – the 5-iron is 25°, the 7 is 32° and the 9 is 40°.



XR16 OS hybrids

A Forged Hyper Speed Face Cup is built to give more speed and forgiveness across the face, so you get the maximum distance out of each shot. The oversize head creates more inertia for max forgiveness. It has a look that gives you confidence over the ball, and it's draw biased to curb that fade.

● **Details:** RRP £169. Available as 3 (19°), 4 (22°), 5 (25°), 6 (28°) and 7 (31°).



XR16 fairways

Callaway has combined its highest MOI, a low centre of gravity and its most springy face ever in a fairway wood. The Forged Hyper Speed Face Cup is thinner and hotter with a larger sweetspot. The Boeing-inspired aero features from the driver are used to gain every last mph of head speed from your swing. A Pro version has a slightly smaller head.

● **Details:** RRP £189, £199 Pro. Available as 3+ (14°), 3 (15°), 4 (17°), 5 (19°), 7 (21°), 9 (23°) and 11° (25°). Pro 14°, 16°, 18°.



For exclusive videos and more 2016 drivers, visit www.todaysgolfer.co.uk

CALLAWAY

Raising the bar

New XR OS range is even more user-friendly

Callaway's XR OS irons were top sellers in 2015 thanks to a predictably successful combination of great looks, forgiveness and distance.

Now the most popular range is poised to become even more appealing as it becomes even more user-friendly with the addition of an oversize set.

It joins the existing XR and XR Pro models in the line, but adds a new Cup Face design, progressive lengths and lofts, a different CG location and wider soles.

Callaway's long-time Research & Development boss Alan Hocknell said: "We've taken our Cup 360 technology that's redefined ball speed in the category and we've made it even faster.

"And with the multi-piece construction we've implemented a new heat treatment in the face cup for even more ball speed, with a soft heat treatment on the body for better feel."

● **Details:** RRP (for seven irons) £599 (s), £749 (g).

BALLS

Golf goes soft

Soft compression is a growing trend

When the likes of Phil Mickelson and Patrick Reed dabble with the concept of a soft compression ball you know it's got legs. The idea of using a 65 compression ball (or softer) that was designed for slower swinging amateurs would have been unthinkable a few years ago. But ideas are changing and when there's performance benefits to be gained, players listen.

Callaway ChromeSoft 16 ➡

Callaway original Chrome Soft was called a 'game changer'. The new version takes the ball from three to four pieces, with a new softer but faster core to increase ball speed from the driver but also lower spin. The construction and low compression means more ball compression on iron shots too, while a new Tour Urethane cover improves control and spin from 100 yards and in.

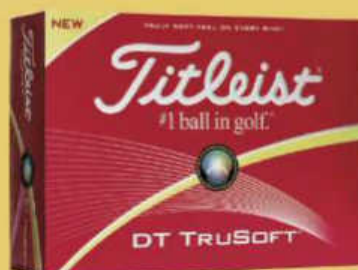
● **Details:** £32.99 per dozen.
www.callawaygolf.com



← Titleist DT TruSoft

Titleist say the TruSoft is for golfers who prefer a truly soft feel without sacrificing distance or short game spin. "DT TruSoft is significantly softer than the DT Solo, which was the softest compression ball in our line up," says Michael Mahoney, Director of Titleist Golf Ball Product Management. There's a new core to maximise distance but also a new cover to enhance short game spin and playability. Titleist say the TruSoft offers the very best combination of all-round performance as it blends distance with soft feel playability like never before.

● **Details:** £20 per dozen www.titleist.co.uk



MIZUNO

Feel and forgiveness

The principles that have made Mizuno's clubs so popular with good players have now been added to gear for the rest of us



JPX EZ driver

Mizuno says movable weight drivers can be difficult to hit as the mass taken up creating the weight tracks raises the centre of gravity. Their solution is a three-track and single 10g weight system to offer a fade, draw or neutral bias, but on a lightweight chassis to improve MOI.

More stability

There's also a larger more stable footprint to increase forgiveness and a more rounded crown to increase face flex, particularly at lower swing speeds.

No shaft upcharge

For the first time Mizuno is offering the new JPX EZ irons with both steel or graphite shafts at the same price. So for the first time you won't need to pay a premium to play graphite.



NEW
GEAR
SPECIAL
2016

Mizuno has an enviable heritage when it comes to forged players' irons. But the vast majority of golfers don't fall into the better player category. They know there's a ton of club golfers who'd love the feel of a Mizuno, but in a more friendly, game-enhancing and playable design, so their engineers have come up with the new JPX EZ range. It's aimed squarely at golfers generating lower ball speeds and those needing a

little extra forgiveness – so, most of us.

There's an adjustable driver and woods, plus a set of forged irons in the line-up. Luke Donald has already put the driver in his bag because he feels more secure with its extra forgiveness, a resounding endorsement of the technology.

● **Details:** JPX EZ driver £349, in lofts of 9° and 10.5°. JPX EZ Forged irons £100 per iron in steel or graphite.



We've hit it

We love forgiving, easy-to-hit gear, and the JPX EZ family fulfills such a role while remaining really good looking. The driver sounds great and looks huge behind the ball, while the forged irons feel great, look great and have the ability to improve your mishits.

JPX EZ Forged irons

- These irons are aimed at a wide range of players, and Mizuno says they are as suited to mid and higher handicappers as they are for professionals who don't like practising much. "Boron Forging" allowed engineers to make the hottest forged face they've ever created. Attention to detail is Mizuno's forte, and they've carefully sculpted the leading and trailing edges of each iron to improve turf interaction for a cleaner strike and less energy loss.



New fairway

Mizuno haven't always got the credit they deserve when it comes to fairways, but the EZ looks great and boasts a newly expanded Shockwave Sole which contracts and expands at impact, increasing energy transfer. A new waffle crown design frees up weight to relocate in the sole, lowering the centre of gravity to maintain ball speeds hit off turf.

● **Details:** Available in 15°, 18°, 21°. RRP £219 (adjustable hosel), £179 (non-adjustable hosel).



Hotter hybrid

Like the other woods, the JPX EZ hybrids have a larger, confidence inspiring footprint than before. The Shockwave Sole is said to increase ball speeds, by contracting and expanding on impact – delivering an additional energy source to the clubface. The additional mass also lowers the head's centre of gravity, maintaining high ball speeds directly off the turf.

● **Details:** Available in 16°, 19°, 22°, 25°. RRP £179.



For exclusive videos on all the new Mizunos, visit www.todaygolfer.co.uk

Nice touch

It's time to throw away that crusty glove you've had for months and get one of these

More than 90% of tour pros wear a glove. Why? It's tackier than skin, especially in hot weather, so prevents a club turning in a player's hand, and it helps prevent blisters. Which one you choose to wear should depend on several things:

Comfort: Crucial. If a glove doesn't feel right, don't wear it.

Material: Some are made from leather, others from synthetic materials; which you choose depends which feels best.

Ventilation: Your gloved hand will sweat, so steer clear of gloves with no ventilation.

Price: As you can see here, prices vary a lot. Softer, leather gloves used on tour are more expensive, but provide more feel.



FootJoy StaSof Leather £20
www.footjoy.co.uk



Mizuno Comp Synthetic £6.95
Golf.mizuno-europe.com



Callaway Tour Authentic £19.95
www.callawaygolf.com



Ping Sensor Tech £12.99
www.ping.com



Puma Pro Performance Leather £15
www.cobragolf.co.uk/pumagolf



Wilson Staff Dual Performance £9.95
www.wilson.com



Callaway Syntech £10.99
www.callawaygolf.com



FootJoy WeatherSof Synthetic £10
www.footjoy.co.uk



Bridgestone Tour Premium £13.50
www.bridgestonegolf.com



Nike Tour Classic £14.95
www.nikegolf.com



Ping Sensor Tour £17.99
www.ping.com

BUYING TIPS

Get the perfect fit

50% of golfers wear a glove that's too big. The Velcro closure should go no more than 75% across the glove. The glove should fit like a second skin with no excess material around the fingers.

Maximise a glove's lifespan

FootJoy recommends that a glove should be replaced after 15-20 rounds. And to prolong a glove's life they recommend buying two and rotating their use, much like shoes.

Care for your gloves

- After a round stretch the glove out to its original shape. This helps maintain subtleness as it lets the natural oils in the leather rise to the surface.
- Use a damp, soft cloth to remove any dirt or stains before letting the glove dry on a towel.
- Never pull on the cuffs of the glove when wearing – simply smooth out the glove with your hand.
- To maintain subtleness, put your glove on and gently work it with your spare hand – don't yank on the cuff to pull it on as this stretches it.

10 ROUNDS WITH...

Cobra King Ltd

RRP: £349 **Tested by:** Rickie Fowler, PGA Tour player



I really like the look of the King Ltd driver. I was involved in the design phase and gave feedback throughout the creation process so I would have been surprised if it didn't look great! I really like the clean, simple head and the black and orange accents suit my eye. The SpacePort weighting is innovative and different from anything else out there.

● The sound

Sound is part of how we perceive feel. Personally I really like the solid sound and feel of the King Ltd, it's the best-sounding driver I've ever hit.

● CG positioning

The zero (neutral) centre of gravity makes it more forgiving, but I still feel like I can work the ball. I believe I hit the King Ltd longer and straighter than my Fly Z+ and looking at my tournament stats I've certainly picked up a few yards. I'm taking the numbers from the range to the golf course, which is really important.

● Ball speed increase

King technology is all about the CG location, and there's extra ball speed in the stability tech. Since switching to the King I've gained 2mph of ball speed which gives me 7-10 yards of extra carry. It also offers me a wider array of shots as I'm able to control my flight conditions better.

● Stability

The stability of modern drivers is absolutely key if I'm to maximise energy transfer to the ball at impact. The King Ltd is more forgiving on off-centre hits and it's more stable. My misses are smaller which from a confidence standpoint is great as it allows me to swing it more aggressively.

● Distance

Distance is really important playing the modern game, but it isn't my No.1 concern when picking a new driver. However, since switching to the King Ltd I've picked up about 7-10 yards which almost equates to a club less I'm hitting into greens as an approach shot.



King Ltd in numbers 16g is positioned in the SpacePort sole weight 20% TexTreme crown is this much lighter than carbon fibre

**My personal
King Ltd set-up**

Loft: 10.5°
Shaft: MATRIX
VLCT prototype
Length: 44.5"

Game face

King Ltd's face is made of lighter titanium to save weight for improved forgiveness, and is thinner towards the heel and toe.

Verdict

Longer, straighter. What more do you need me to say? I can't make a driver switch unless I have confidence in the new club. I need to believe it's better than my current gamer. Looking at the numbers switching to the King Ltd was a no brainer.

**Don't take
Rickie's word**

Looking at Rickie's 2015 driving stats against 2016's he's made an improvement of 10 yards which is impressive, but it doesn't tell the whole story as some of the 2015 data was generated when using the King Ltd.

- 2015 driving distance **296.8 yards**
- 2016 driving distance **306.3 yards**

Comparing the same event in 2014 to 2015 when he definitely wasn't using the same driver, there's an increase of four yards – granted not massive, but that doesn't take weather conditions into account.

- 2014 WGC HSBC Champions **280 yards**
- 2015 WGC HSBC Champions **284 yards**

Data and stats

**With previous driver
(Cobra Fly Z +):**
Ball speed: 175mph
Backspin: 2400rpm
Carry distance: 301 yds

With King Ltd driver:
Ball speed: 177mph
Backspin: 2400rpm
Carry distance: 308 yds

Zero CG CG is under a line drawn from the face centre to the back of the head, aiding MOI and energy transfer.



10 ROUNDS WITH...

Mizuno S5 wedges

Cost: £110 **Tested by:** Chris Ryan, equipment expert (pro)



For a while now Mizuno have offered a couple of wedge shapes – a larger rounder head (the S5) and more of a teardrop shape with straighter leading edge. Their promise with the S5 as with anything Mizuno is excellent feel and shotmaking potential.

● The profile

The S5's blade length is a little longer than some and has a slightly curved leading edge. I tend to take a lot of sand and dig deep into bunkers so the rounder styling helps me cut through the sand.

● Quad Cut Grooves

Mizuno CNC mill the grooves and face on every S5 wedge which obviously adds to the cost as it's extra work. The milling is so precise it allows every groove to sit right on the edge of the rules. From my

testing not only on the course but also on a Foresight GC2 launch monitor the S5 spins amongst the top handful of wedges on the market. So it's more than capable of getting shots to nestle down on a putting surface.

● Loft, grind and bounce options

You can measure how serious a brand is about the wedge market by how many options of lofts and lies they offer. Mizuno offer 25 options in the S5 and cover every loft between 49° and 62° in one-degree increments, which is seriously impressive. To offer a 58° wedge in 4°, 8°, 12° and 16° of bounce is unheard of.

● Blue IP or White Satin?

Obviously it's a personal choice and some Mizuno fans will love the Blue IP, but for me I'm much more comfortable with the

White Satin. It's what I'm used to and frames the ball much better at address rather than being more of a distraction.

● Feel

Mizuno are well known for great feel and I'd have to say the S5 is right up there alongside the best I've tried. On both full and half shots the wedge is very solid and is probably helped a little by the shaping of the back which helps increase MOI over a traditional wedge.

● The verdict

Overall I really like the S5 and I'd have no issue gaming them. I love the precision-milled face and grooves which guarantee maximum stopping power. I also like the contrast between the bead blast groove section and toe and heel areas as it really focused my attention on the ball.

Personalise your S5

You've probably seen how tour pros have all sorts of logos and names stamped on the back of their wedges; Mizuno now offer a similar service. You can add six characters in one of 12 colours to the back of each wedge you buy, at no extra cost. So whether it's your kids' names on the back of your favourite wedge or the yards you hit each loft, why not take advantage?



Totalcontrol
Precision-milled faces ensure the S5's grooves nudge legal limits for spin rates.

What's in Luke Donald's bag? S5 54° loft, 8° bounce S5 60° loft, 6° bounce Both with Dynamic Gold Spinner shafts



A step forward
The same high-performance outsole and Nike's Lunarlon midsole from the Lunar Control 3 offers better traction.

10 ROUNDS WITH...

Nike Lunar Control 4

RRP: £130 **Tested by:** Chris Jones, Editor, Hcp 12



When Rory McIlroy asked for more stability from his shoes, Nike came up with the Lunar Control 4. It is designed to stay tight to the ground through the swing and uses a cabling system – Nike calls it Flywire technology – in the body to increase control and support. I've been wearing them now since November. I've played in 30° heat in Dubai and in monsoon conditions in the UK.

● First impressions

The first thing that strikes you is the enormous swoosh on both toes. It's a feature of Nike football boots, and though I thought it might distract your eyes at address, it doesn't. They're light, too (376g), and exceptionally comfortable.

● Performance

Nike says Rory likes a really close, sensory fit to his shoes and he has a lot of toe movement at address and throughout his swing. He talks about building a launch platform from the ground up to enable him to create more torque, saying: "It's a design I've been involved with ever since my first year with Nike." I've been impressed by the stability, too. Even on wet grass the wide footprint (the widest yet of Nike's Lunar shoes) provides tons of support. Sadly I can't rip it 380 like McIlroy did while wearing these shoes for the first time in Dubai, but my driving has genuinely improved since I've had them. Two sub-80 rounds and second in my club's Christmas comp (hitting all but one fairway) backs that up.

● Comfort

Can't be faulted. They've been superb straight out of the box. The microfibre synthetic upper has been redesigned to be lighter and is claimed to be waterproof – I can confirm it is after playing some of the wettest courses I've ever seen. Nike's "Dynamic Flywire" system uses cables that wrap around the upper to secure your foot, which it does very well, while a split tongue wraps around to your ankles.

● Looks

That enormous swoosh divides opinion. I quite like it, others have told me it's too garish. Our white and pink pair still look great after some truly sodden rounds; a quick wipe and they're clean again. They're also available in white/black and white/grey.

● The verdict

Rory McIlroy wouldn't have switched to them if they didn't offer an improvement over his old shoes. I've had Nike's Lunar Control 2 and 3 shoes, and the 4 is a significant improvement.

Rory says: "I use the ground a lot with my golf swing, and that's one of the reasons I hit the ball a long way for the size I am."

10 ROUNDS WITH...

Titleist 716 T-MB

RRP: £169 **Tested by:** Chris Jones, Editor, Hcp 12



I've had two hybrids in the bag for years, replacing my 3 and 4-irons. But last autumn, on numerous occasions, I felt I was losing distance into the wind on long par 3s and par-5 approaches as the 4 in particular flew so high with lots of spin. So I was keen to try Titleist's 23° 716 T-MB, which is aimed at players who need high launch and long carry, but prefer the look of a blade.

● The tech

A hollow construction of cast 431 stainless steel with a thin face is said to improve deflection at impact. Heavier tungsten in the heel and toe aids stability on off-centre hits compared to the old 712U driving iron. One-degree stronger lofts produce similar trajectories to the 712U, but with less spin.

● Looks

Fantastic, inspiring plenty of confidence for a long iron. Put it down behind the ball and the blade-like head forces you to think about the strike. But there's so much forgiveness on offer, from those tungsten weights to the high MOI face, that even if you don't catch it purely, it still goes. The bronze panels on the sole may divide opinion – I like them.

● Performance

I've found no drop-off in distance or forgiveness compared to the hybrid – but my ball-striking and consistency has improved, especially off tight fairway lies which would fill me with dread with a hybrid. The iron also flies lower and runs further than the hybrid, ideal for tight tee

shots. On Tour Titleist sees about a 50/50 split between these and hybrids, depending on the course being played.

● Playability

From the tee or fairway, I find myself reaching for the T-MB more than the 3 hybrid. I've got far more confidence with it now from the fairway, and only if the ball is sitting down in longer grass will I consider the hybrid option. It's so much more forgiving than my old 4-iron, and inconsistency with that is why I went to the hybrid in the first place.

● The verdict

There's no doubt this is a specialist club. For an iron – albeit one with a lot of tech – some will consider it expensive, too (it's £189 in graphite). You need to be able to generate enough ball speed to launch it high enough so that it stops quickly, but a fitting at a Trial Titleist event (www.titleist.co.uk/golf-club-trial) will be able to give you that info. But for my swing, and the windy course I usually play, it's a great addition to the bag.



Packed with tech

The muscle back frame with tungsten weights provides a great combination of forgiveness with a high launch.

The options Available in 2 (17°), 3 (20°), 4 (23°), 5 (26°), steel £169 per club, graphite £189 per club.

PRIZE DRAW

WIN THE VERY LATEST OSCAR JACOBSON WATERPROOFS

We've got three sets of top-of-the-range clothing to give away



In the detail OJ is so confident in the performance it offers a five-year guarantee.



Keep playing Oscar Jacobson's 'Weather Protection System' will keep you on course.

We've teamed up with Oscar Jacobson to give you the chance to win one of three Mickey Tour waterproof suits.

OJ is a leading Swedish apparel brand with 113 years of heritage in making stylish high performance clothing and outerwear. It is renowned for its layered WPS (Weather Protection System) which offers solutions to cope with whatever the British weather

can throw at you, and the Mickey Tour is the brand's premium waterproof suit.

It's constructed from a three-layer fabric with four-way stretch to ensure maximum freedom of movement as you swing. The fabric is also windproof and breathable meaning it will keep you protected no matter what the conditions. There's also a soft jersey inner to keep you warm.

OJ is so confident in the performance of

the Mickey Tour that both garments come with an impressive five-year waterproof guarantee.

How to enter

Log on to www.todaysgolfer.co.uk/win, click on the Oscar Jacobson option and enter your email address. Entries close on February 17, 2016. Full terms and conditions can be found on the TG website.

ENTER NOW AT WWW.TODAYSGOLFER.CO.UK/WIN

Courses & Travel

WHERE TO PLAY AT
HOME AND ABROAD

EDITED BY KEVIN BROWN

Woburn

The Duke's 17th sums up the course's beauty, and its danger.



REGIONAL GUIDE

Get into Beds...and Bucks

Though small counties, this dynamic duo packs a punch for value and quality


WORDS KEVIN BROWN

I nland golf doesn't get any better than the Bucks trio of Woburn, Stoke Park and The Buckinghamshire. The county is home to more National Trust Properties than any other, but clearly it also finds the space for some superb golf. Neighbouring Bedfordshire might struggle to match those names, but the quality remains high, and the value arguably better.

But let's start with the main golfing attraction and that's got to be Woburn, proud home of three stunning 18-hole courses (Marquess', Duke's and Duchess') and which made a welcome return to the big time last year by staging the British Masters on the modern classic Marquess'. The British Masters has been held at Woburn 17 times with the vast majority on the Duke's. Created

in 1974 this was Woburn's first course, with the shorter but equally delightful Duchess' joining it five years later. Although the longer, wonderfully winding Marquess' is widely considered the main attraction these days, many members and visitors prefer the charm and challenge of the two senior layouts.

With excellent practice facilities and a smashing fairly recently refurbished



John O' Gaunt
The tough par-3
10th; No walk in
the park.

clubhouse, Woburn provides the ultimate day out and, if you're lucky, you might even spot Ian Poulter who represents the club on Tour. The only thing missing is the lack of on-site accommodation though there are plenty of options nearby.

However, that is certainly not the case at iconic Stoke Park, surely one of the country's finest stay-and-play venues. To be frank, you'll struggle to find better: steeped in history, it boasts 27 holes of quality Harry Colt parkland golf (Colt, Alison & Lane Jackson nines), luxury accommodation in the incredible Palladian manor house – which doubles up as the best clubhouse around – and The Pavilion, an award-winning spa, the finest of dining options and more besides.

On-course major changes are taking place with Stoke Park investing a seven-figure sum in rebuilding every single bunker on its 27 holes, starting with the Colt (holes 1-9) with minor design changes being made to their shape and size before the holes re-open in April.

Director of Golf Stuart Collier explains: "We are very fortunate to have three nines of outstanding quality

The courses

● Woburn

Green fees: Till Feb 18 holes on any course with bacon roll, coffee and lunch for £115. Contact: 01908 626881.

● Stoke Park

Green fees: Winter £85 midweek, £145 weekends. Contact: 01753 717171.

● The Buckinghamshire

Green fees: £90 Mon-Thurs, £120 Fri-Sun. Contact: 01895 835777.

● Denham

Green fees: Winter rate £40. Contact: 01895 832801.

● Magnolia Park

Green fees: £45 midweek, £50 weekends. Contact: 01844 239700.

● Beaconsfield

Green fees: £70 midweek only. Contact: 01494 676545.

which enables us to close one for a brief period while maintaining 18 championship holes for members and visitors. So, holes one to nine will remain closed during the works period this winter, while holes 10 to 27 – the Alison and Lane Jackson – will ensure there will always be 18 holes in play."

The Buckinghamshire is also experiencing a comprehensive upgrade with Japanese drinks giant Asahi Group investing £2m on the renovation project which will be implemented over the next two winters. This will include a rebuild of the course's bunkering plus building an irrigation reservoir and installing a new irrigation system.

Strategically plotted within 226 acres of pure mature parkland not far from the M25, the John Jacobs-designed layout opened in 1992 and has hosted a series of prestigious tournaments, including six European Senior Tour events, and is the HQ of the Ladies European Tour.

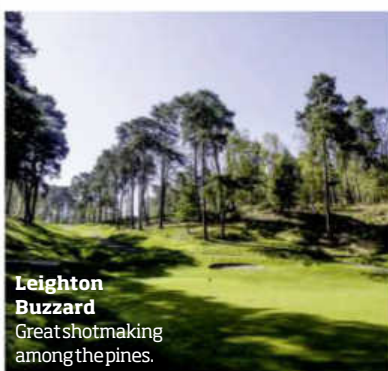
Such venues obviously come at a price (see panel) though there's plenty of great value around too: just down the road from Woburn you can experience splendid parkland golf at

'Leighton Buzzard mixes heath and parkland, with mature timber framing the holes'

Aspley Guise & Woburn Sands for considerably less while just opposite Stoke Park you can do likewise at South Buckinghamshire GC for just over £20. But the great Bucks value doesn't end there with both Magnolia Park and Wycombe Heights excellent all round venues: the former is a modern layout designed by Jonathan Gaunt, built to USGA-specification and sits within 200 acres of countryside overlooked by a brand new on-site hotel. Wycombe Heights has plenty going for it too, providing one of the most popular pay-and-play venues in the south of England. Just off the M40, it offers two 18-hole John Jacobs courses with one unusually being a par-3 layout, ideal for beginners and those seeking a testing warm-up for the Main course.



Stoke Park
New bunkers
but a timeless
setting.



Leighton Buzzard
Great shotmaking
among the pines.



Luton Hoo
An inland links
feel, carved from
listed parkland.

Pride of Bedfordshire meanwhile is undoubtedly John O'Gaunt on Sandy Heath. The club offers two contrasting 18-hole layouts; the longer John O'Gaunt is a serious examination of parkland golf thanks to mature tree-lined fairways, severe rough and small greens while the Carthage is shorter and has much larger greens. The magnificent clubhouse, built in 1859 and overlooking the last green of John O'Gaunt, is a great place to unwind afterwards. Club pro by the way is Lee Scarbrow who set Ian Poulter on the way to superstardom.

Another Bedfordshire star is Leighton Buzzard where Poulter learnt his trade as an aspiring young assistant pro. It's a wonderful mixture of parkland/heathland golf, Woburn-esque in places, with mature timber framing many fairways – with the stunning par-3 11th being the most memorable hole.

If you're looking for another magical place to stay and play, treat yourself to a visit to Luton Hoo, conveniently located close to Luton airport and the M1. The modern par-73 USGA-spec course is maturing nicely and has a fine variety of holes with the pick

involving an outstanding parkland stretch on the back nine, frighteningly featuring a monster 261-yard par-3! But the good news is that, being plotted on protected land, at least you don't have any bunkers to worry about. However, the real star of the show is the glorious luxury 18th-century mansion house hotel which has entertained royalty and prime ministers alike and overlooks a superb landscape created by legendary garden designer, Lancelot 'Capability' Brown.

The impressive clubhouse is part of a former stables courtyard which also features a splendid spa, pro shop and relaxed dining in Adam's Brasserie. It's a short walk from the main house/hotel though you can hitch a free ride aboard one of a fleet of London Cabs if you prefer.

Finally, you'll find a good cluster of courses around the county town of Bedford with Bedfordshire GC being among them. Founded in 1891, it's the oldest club in the county but strangely boasts one of the newest courses – it opened in 2000 after being forced to move from its previous home owing to re-development.

The courses

● **John O'Gaunt**
Green fees: £55
(£50 at weekends
after 3pm). Contact:
01767 260360.

● **Luton Hoo**
Green fees: From
£25. Contact: 01582
734437.

● **Dunstable Downs**
Green fees: Winter
rate £30. Contact:
01582 662806.

● **Leighton Buzzard**
Green fees: £38
midweek only.
Contact: 01525
244800.

● **Aspley Guise & Woburn Sands**
Green fees: £40
midweek, £56
weekends. Contact:
01908 583596.

● **Bedford & County**
Green fees: £30
midweek, £35
weekends. Contact:
01234 352617.

DO IT YOURSELF

● Where to stay

If you want to treat yourself, historic Luton Hoo and Stoke Park will deliver the goods. Elsewhere, the four-star Woburn Hotel in the heart of the village is ideal for the Woburn courses while the new hotel on the block is the 30-room Best Western Plus Magnolia Park Hotel.

● Do it yourself

Deal 1: Golf Residential package at Luton Hoo costs from £135 per person (Sundays) and includes B&B in a Parkland or Flower Garden Deluxe room, 36 holes per person, three-course dinner in Adam's Brasserie, use of the Country Club facilities. Costs from £145pp Mon-Sat. To book call 01582 698856.

Deal 2: One night's D, B&B in a Superior Room at Stoke Park, including three-course dinner in Humphry's fine dining restaurant, and 18 holes per person, costs £548 based on double/twin occupancy. Valid until March 2016. To book call 01753 717171.

● Off Course

● Let the steam train take the strain on the Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway.

● Fun for all at Chiltern Open Air Museum, Hell-Fire Caves and Bekonscot Model Village.

● The Chiltern Brewery is the oldest independent brewery in Bucks and houses a wonderful brewery shop – well worth a special visit.

● There's plenty of entertainment on offer at several popular theatres, including Aylesbury's Waterside and The Wycombe Swan in High Wycombe.

● Beds is a great place to get up close with the animals as it's the home of both Woburn Safari Park and ZSL Whipsnade Zoo.

● Visit the historic Woburn Abbey's Palladian manor house, complete with a significant art collection and stunning gardens.

MY TOP 10 COURSES



Scott Jamieson

Loch Lomond marks the only non-links choice for the Scot

Glaswegian Scott Jamieson loves links golf. So much so that nine of his favourite UK courses are links layouts with half of them being current Open venues; Northern Ireland's Royal Portrush will make it six in 2019.

Of the nine, Hillside on England's Golf Coast is the only English course. The rest are north of the border – including Jamieson's home club of Western Gailes.

Now 32, Jamieson marks his 10th year as a professional in 2016 and will be looking to celebrate by adding to his single European Tour success, in 2013's Nelson Mandela Championship.

● Nairn, Scottish Highlands

Top links in the north east of Scotland but it's a course I've always loved to play. You get it on a nice, calm day and you can shoot a good score, but if the wind blows then it's an extremely tough test.

Green fees: Winter rate £50.

● Western Gailes, Ayrshire

Fair enough, I may be a bit biased because I'm a member there but I still honestly believe that it's one of the best links courses around and provides a serious examination of golf whatever time of the year.

Green fees: Winter rate £60.

● Royal Portrush, Co Antrim

Another stunning links and it's fantastic The Open is returning here. You're right on the coast and there are lots of natural sand dunes and changes in elevation. It's just a true magical links layout.

Green fees: Winter rate £60.

● St Andrews, Fife

It's the Old Course, it's the Home of Golf, the history and The Opens. It's just hallowed turf trodden by the golfing greats and it's always a



Royal Portrush
The Open returns to this superb links in 2019.

privilege and honour to play there.
Green fees: £85-£175.

● Carnoustie, Angus

Once upon a time I never actually enjoyed playing here but it has definitely grown on me to the extent that it features in my Top 10 list. The more I play it, the more I appreciate how challenging and great a test it is.

Green fees: Winter rate £80.

● Loch Lomond, Dunbartonshire

If you get an opportunity to play here, seize it with both hands! It's a great golf course in itself but the scenery around the place is pretty spectacular and sets up the whole package, helping guarantee a memorable experience.

Green fees: Members & members' guests only.

My golf CV

- Turned pro in 2006 (plus 4).
- Graduated from the Challenge Tour in 2010.
- In 2011 made his debut for GB&I in the Seve Trophy.
- His one European Tour win is 2013's weather-affected Nelson Mandela Championship which he won after a play-off.
- His next best performance was a 3rd-place finish in the following year's Russia Open.
- Secured his 2016 playing rights by the skin of his teeth after surviving the cut in the final regular event, the UBS Hong Kong Open.

● Turnberry, Ayrshire

Spectacular and dramatic links that will literally take your breath away. There are a lot of huge dunes so with many of the holes you feel like you're playing in a stadium and that's something I really enjoy.

Green fees: £125-£275. The Ailsa course re-opens in July.

● Royal Lytham, Lancashire

Another famous Open venue which, in my mind, is similar to Carnoustie: it's not particularly pretty but is just a really good test of golf. Every aspect of your game has to be on point or you get into trouble.

Green fees: Winter rate £122-£158.

● Muirfield, East Lothian

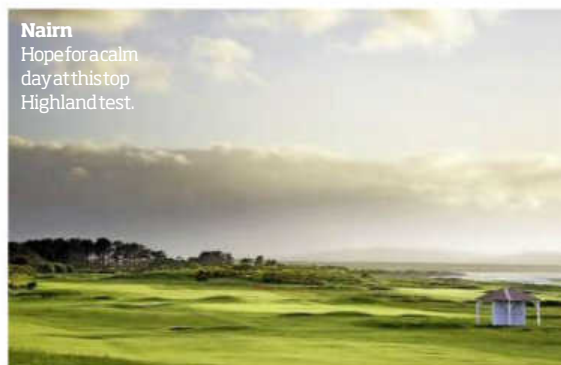
It's one of those traditional links courses that always demands the best from your game. The last time I played there was in The Open and frankly I found it too tough and probably stopped enjoying it. Nevertheless it's still a great course.

Green fees: Winter rate £110.

● Hillside, Merseyside

I've featured a lot of Scottish courses but this is an English links gem which, being right next door to Royal Birkdale, probably doesn't get the recognition it deserves. Another great test.

Green fees: Winter rates £65-£85.



Nairn
Hope for a calm day at this top Highland test.

BELEK'S BEST...ALL YEAR ROUND

Stay and play at the sun-kissed resort where Tiger and Rory went head to head



Luxury awaits at Antalya Golf Club and at Sirene Belek Hotel (pictured)

Right next door to the manicured fairways of the PGA Sultan and the Pasha at Antalya GC is the Sirene Belek Hotel. It boasts four restaurants, six bars, a cafe, a nightclub, an amazing spa, kid's club and an array of super leisure facilities.



THE eyes of the golfing world were on Belek in 2012, when Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy jetted in to Turkey to take part in their only matchplay showdown to date.

The biggest names in the game chose **Antalya Golf Club** as their venue, as they and several other world superstars – such as Lee Westwood and eventual champion Justin Rose – competed in the Turkish Airlines World Golf Final.

They selected wisely, for **Antalya Golf Club's** PGA Sultan course has been a fixture in Golf World magazine's Top 100 Courses in Continental Europe for many years. It is complemented by its sister, the slightly-shorter Pasha, a charming course that is a Top 200-listed venue.

Antalya Golf Club wasn't the first course in Belek, but it was the first to promote the area as a 'must visit' for British golfers – so it has played a key part in the rapid popularity of this region in southern Turkey. In addition to the world-class courses, there are two stunning, five-star hotels right next door – the family-friendly Sirene Belek and the opulent Kempinski.

Both are magnificent places to base yourself for a memorable week's golf holiday.

Of course both the courses and the hotels are blessed with year-round sunshine that makes it easy to understand why the area is known as 'The Belek Golf Riviera'. Even in January, you will only need a sweater in the evening...

So what are you waiting for? Book now to tread the very same fairways where Tiger and Rory did battle!

Five reasons to book now

- **Antalya Golf Club** boasts two of the finest courses in Europe
- Both courses are in immaculate condition all year round
- Antalya Golf Club offer preferential tee

times and rates to Sirene Belek and Kempinski's guests

- Amazing weather every month of the year
- Lots to do off the course – from sandy beaches to stunning spas and lots of water sports

Contact Antalya Golf Club: Visit www.agc.com.tr, call 0090 242 725 5970 or email Reservation@agc.com.tr

HOST OF THE TAWGF AND EISENHOWER TROPHY 2012



Idyllic setting
The Waterfall is
plotted in 500 acres
of rolling downs.

STAY AND PLAY

South Lodge, Sussex

An opulent retreat to use as a base for Mannings Heath

Set in 93 acres of gardens in the pretty village of Lower Beeding in West Sussex, five-star South Lodge Hotel has a perfect location. It enjoys this leafy setting while being close to the market towns of Horsham and Arundel and just 20 minutes from cosmopolitan Brighton as well as Gatwick airport.

The country house was bought by the Pecorelli family in 1985 and they transformed it into a luxury hotel of 89 rooms with two award-winning restaurants and superb amenities.

Just five minutes' drive from South Lodge – part of the Exclusive Hotels portfolio that also includes Manor House at Castle Combe and Pennyhill Park in Surrey – is sister property Mannings Heath Golf Club. It has two contrasting 18-holers: the members-only Waterfall and the Kingfisher across the road. Hotel guests not only have access to both courses but receive preferential rates.

● On-course

The main attraction is the Waterfall, heavily influenced by Harry Colt and one of the jewels of Sussex. The Waterfall is a mix of heathland,

The facts

● Top deal:

One night packages based on two sharing from £135pp (Sunday) include overnight accommodation, breakfast and a three-course dinner in the Camellia restaurant, use of the range, 18 holes on the Waterfall and 18 on the Kingfisher (tee times may be restricted, rates subject to availability). Two-night deals from £250. Call 01403 891711 or visit southlodgehotel.co.uk

● Green fees:

Waterfall course – members, members' guests and hotel residents only; Kingfisher course – Winter rates: £17.50 midweek, £24 weekends.

● Contact:

Telephone 01403 210228 or visit manningsheath.com

downland and parkland. Par 3s don't come more exciting than the 5th, 'Punchbowl', and the 10th, 'Waterfall'. Gary Player's favourite was the superb par-4 11th and you regularly hit from elevated tees across valleys here. The less demanding par-70 Kingfisher celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2016 while the striking 17th Century clubhouse is a great spot to relax in.

● Off-course

All 89 rooms and suites are individually designed and named. They feature handmade mattresses and pillows and a BOSE surround-sound DVD player. You can dine in style at Head Chef Matt Gillian's The Pass, with its one Michelin Star and four AA Rosettes, and the elegant The Camellia restaurant. Facilities include mountain bikes, an all-weather tennis court, running and walking trails. The Cellar, a restored subterranean Victorian vault with around 300 wines, is well worth a visit too. There is free wi-fi and a comprehensive DVD library. Bothy Cottage, next to South Lodge, sleeps up to 10 people and is ideal for groups, as is Fullers Cottage (up to eight) next to the clubhouse.



Top to bottom: The Kingfisher has USGA-spec tees and greens; in 2008, South Lodge opened 44 new bedrooms, a bar, kitchen and The Pass restaurant; expect to stay in grandeur in a South Lodge bedroom.

HALF-PRICE GOLF

2-FORE!-1 On Tour

Follow in the footsteps of heroes at these seven European Tour-staging venues

1 Slaley Hall, Northumberland

Par 72, 6,530 yards

Retief Goosen and Colin Montgomerie have both triumphed at Slaley Hall, a superb QHotels stay-and-play venue. It's gloriously set among 1,000 acres of Northumbrian forest and moorland. The stunning par-4 9th is perhaps the pick of a fine crop.

2-FORE!-1: Mon-Thurs (on full rate). **Green fees:** £26-£110. **Contact:** 01434 673350.

2 Wenvoe Castle, Vale of Glamorgan

Par 72, 6,544 yards

This mature James Braid parkland layout provides an interesting and challenging test of golf in picturesque surroundings. In 1979 the venue saw former Ryder Cup captain Mark James register his first strokeplay victory on Tour.

2-FORE!-1: All week (main season). **Green fees:** £40 midweek, £45 weekends. **Contact:** 02920 594371.

3 Hill Barns, Sussex

Par 70, 6,229 yards

This mature Fred Hawtree track nestles in the rolling hills of the South Downs National Park. You'll love the panoramic English Channel views but you can't afford

to get too distracted because Hill Barns, with its undulating fairways, subtle greens and 100-plus bunkers, demands your full attention. Hosted the 1974 Penfold Tournament won by Tommy Horton.

2-FORE!-1: Mon-Thurs. **Green fees:** £24 midweek, £30 weekends. **Contact:** 01903 237301.

4 Forest of Arden, Warwicks

Par 72, 6,451 yards

The Donald Steel-designed Arden has hosted seven European Tour events (British Masters from 1997-1999 and 2003, and the English Open 2000-2002). It runs through Packington Estate and boasts a terrific variety of holes with a thrilling par-3 finale over a water-filled valley.

2-FORE!-1: All week. **Green fees:** £60-£120. **Contact:** 01676 526113.

5 St Mellion, Cornwall

Par 72, 6,579 yards

It staged six B&H International Opens in the 1990s, the winners including Seve Ballesteros and Bernhard Langer. It was Jack Nicklaus' first course design in England and will almost certainly prove to be one of the most entertaining and

formidable toughest tracks you've played.

2-FORE!-1: All week – Nov-Feb after midday, Mar-Oct any time (book 10 days in advance). **Green fees:** £30-£100. **Contact:** 01579 352004.

6 Bingley St Ives, West Yorks

Par 71, 6,289 yards

Staged the Lawrence Batley International for three years from 1981 with Sandy Lyle (twice) and then Nick Faldo emerging victorious. Chiefly the handiwork of Alister MacKenzie, Bingley has been entertaining and testing golfers since the early 1930s and provides glorious Aire valley views.

2-FORE!-1: Mondays. **Green fees:** Winter rates £15 midweek, £30 weekends. **Contact:** 01274 562436.

7 St Pierre, Monmouth

Par 72, 6,514 yards

The Old Course has hosted the 1996 Solheim Cup and a collection of European Tour events, resulting in wins for the likes of Seve, Woosie and Greg Norman. A memorable round climaxes with a nerve-jangling 200-yard-plus par-3 over water.

2-FORE!-1: Mon-Fri. **Green fees:** £20-£65. **Contact:** 01291 635205.

2-FORE!-1
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Slaley thanks
to 2-FORE!-1.



Stellar venue
Gardagolf is a former host of the Italian Open.

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

On the edge of Garda

The famously beautiful lake can host a super golf break

Golf in Italy hit the headlines with the awarding of the 2022 Ryder Cup to Rome – but elsewhere in the country there is much to admire, not least in the Lake Garda region in the north.

Gardagolf, which celebrates its 30th anniversary in 2016, is targeting UK and Irish golfers for the first time after negotiating package rates with a number of nearby 'partner' hotels.

"Lake Garda has traditionally been regarded as a lifestyle destination, a cultural haven, and one of Europe's most beautiful regions. We aim to become the chosen destination for UK golfers in northern Italy," said Gardagolf director Giambattista Pisa.

Lake Garda is Italy's largest lake – 31 miles long – where the Dolomite mountains tumble to the water's edge. Olive, cypress and lemon trees weave across the hillsides and vineyards dot the landscape. It is also just 40 minutes from Verona airport and the region's mild climate means it is a good year-round destination.

Gardagolf is one of four 27-hole complexes and six 18-holers around Lake Garda. The complex has three loops of nine holes (Red, White and

The facts

● Getting there:

Monarch fly to Verona from Manchester and Gatwick, from £80 return. Visit monarch.co.uk

● Green fees:

Gardagolf - 18 holes
€60 weekdays; €70 weekends

● Contact:

gardagolf.it;
hotelportalsole.it;
ilbancoristorante.it

● Do it yourself:

Deal 1: Two nights' B&B and two rounds at Maison Gardagolf from €360pp (two sharing a twin). Visit gardagolf.it or e-mail info@gardagolf.it

Deal 2: Three nights' B&B at Hotel Porta Del Sole and three rounds for €369 (Mar 1-Apr 30 & Oct 1-Nov 15). Visit hotelportalsole.it or email info@hotelportalsole.it

Yellow) which wind along the Valtenesi Hills – the first 18 holes (Red and White) opened in 1986 and have twice hosted the Italian Open. A further nine holes (Yellow) opened four years later.

The Red meanders over hills from Castle Soiano to the municipal of Polpenazze offering spectacular views. The White stretches from Soiano towards Menerba while the Yellow is much shorter and has smaller greens protected by bunkers and water.

Just a five-minute walk away from the club is the four-star Hotel Porta Del Sole, which enjoys views of Lake Garda. A visit to Verona, the romantic setting for Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, is a must, with the two main hubs for food and wine being Piazza Bra and Piazza Erbe.

As well as Gardagolf, Arzaga Golf has a layout by Nicklaus Design and also a Gary Player-designed nine-hole. GC Ca'degli Ulivi is another 27-hole complex located 3km above Lake Garda with the main course surrounded by olive groves and cypress trees. Other golfing highlights include the Bogliaco Golf Resort, GC Paradiso del Garda and the nine-hole GC Il Colombaro.



Top to bottom: Gardagolf sits between a UNESCO-protected nature reserve, Rocca di Manerba, and the 10th century Castle of Soiano; Gardagolf clubhouse; there are seven rooms available at Maison Gardagolf.

^{Today's} **Golfer** **TRAVEL** **AWARDS** **2016**

Your votes have been counted and now we reveal the winners in the annual Today's Golfer Travel Awards. Thousands voted across 21 categories to identify the best of Spain, Portugal, France and the home nations. These are the winners...





**BEST-VALUE
DESTINATION**
Murcia



BEST RESORT
La Manga Club

Why they won: Boasting a wide array of courses including flagship resort La Manga Club, Murcia is Spain's up-and-coming sunshine golf destination. There are 22 courses within a 35km radius, offering some of the best-value green fees on the Med. You can enjoy more than 300 holes, including a selection of layouts created by some of golf's

biggest names such as Seve Ballesteros, José María Olazabal, and Jack Nicklaus (the region's Nicklaus Golf Trail features six varied 18-hole courses in Mar Menor, La Torre, El Valle, Alhama, Saurines and Riquelme).

Hacienda Del Alamo has become popular since opening 10 years ago, but Murcia's top dog is La Manga Club, with three 18-hole layouts (South, North & West) and a new Leadbetter Golf Academy – the only one in mainland Spain.

Set in 1,400 acres, the resort boasts a 28-court tennis centre, a 2,000m² spa and fitness centre plus the choice of a five-star hotel, four-star serviced apartments and townhouses and more than 20 bars and restaurants. It's won Spain's Best Hotel/Resort award five years running!

Do it yourself: Three nights and three rounds at Hotel Principe Felipe from €415pp (five nights, four green fees from €635pp, seven nights, five green fees from €850pp) based on two sharing a double/twin. Exclusive offer for TG readers: Free upgrade when booked before Mar 1, subject to availability. Quote TGJAN16. Contact: 0034 968 175577, www.lamangaclub.com



BEST COURSE

PGA Catalunya

Why it won: It's home of the magnificent Stadium course, a regular European Tour



and Q School venue. It has replaced Valderrama as Spain's No.1 with former Ryder Cup captain Jose Maria Olazabal claiming: "It is one of the best courses in the world. It is very well composed and there is a lot of risk and reward." It's a great all-round test, with lakes in play on seven holes, and is always in immaculate condition – as is the neighbouring relatively easier Tour layout.

Do it yourself: Overnight B&B stay (based on two sharing a standard double room) and Tour Course green fee costs €165 per person from June 1-30 (Stadium Course supplement of €10). Plus, exclusively for TG readers, daily complimentary range balls (bucket of 50 balls) and daily manual trolley. To book call 0034 972 472577 or e-mail reserves@pgacatalunya.com 📧



Top prize
PGA Catalunya was
a strong Ryder Cup
2022 candidate.



Star quality
Arnold Palmer has
advised on the South
course at La Manga.



Better than ever
Quintado Lago North
has benefited from a
stylish makeover.



BEST RESORT

**Quinta Do Lago, Penha Longa,
Marina Vilamoura & Vila Sol**

Why they won: This was the most keenly-contested category in TG awards history, with honours shared by four venues – three in the Algarve plus Penha Longa, near Lisbon. Last year's outright winner, Quinta do Lago, with three world-class courses (North, South and Laranjal) had to share top spot along with Pestana Vila Sol Resort, with its outstanding Donald Steel-designed layout just outside Vilamoura, Tivoli Marina – another five-star venue by the marina and beach – and former Portuguese Open venue Penha Longa.

Do it yourself: Five nights' B&B at the four-star Monte da Quinta Suites with three rounds (QDL South, North and Laranjal) and a 30-minute TaylorMade Fitting Experience, from €500pp (subject to availability). Email reservas@quintadolago.com or phone 00351 289 390 705/6, quoting reference 'TGA16.'



BEST COURSE

Vilamoura Old Course

Why it won: Several impressive new layouts have emerged in the Algarve in recent years, but Vilamoura's Old – the region's second oldest layout – remains king. It's the fifth

straight win for Frank Pennink's 1969 design, which weaves between avenues of umbrella pines. Its undoubted charm – plus the fact it's not ultra-long and demanding – puts it in a class of its own. Unbeatable holiday golf.

Do it yourself: Easter Special of €78 per round for tee times after midday (from Mar 20 to Apr 3) – it's €140 the week before! To book visit www.oceanicogolf.com/bookings/golf-specials/easter-special



BEST RESORT

Evian Resort

Why it won: It offers two hotels (five-star Hotel Royal and four-star Hotel Ermitage) and a scenic par-72 Championship course which stages an LPGA Major (won in 2015 by Lydia Ko). It's plotted within a 42-acre park at the foot of the Alps overlooking Lake Geneva, and so is reached by regular UK flights to Geneva airport, which is about 25 miles away.

Do it yourself: For offers visit www.evianresort.com/uk or e-mail golf@evianresort.com



BEST COURSE

Le Golf National

Why it won: The French Open and 2018 Ryder Cup venue near Versailles is back on top. Hubert Chesneau and Robert Von Hagge's



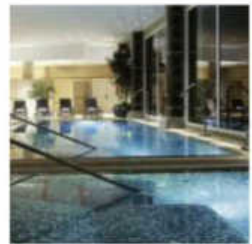
Water torture?

Lakes dominate the start and finish of Le Golf National.

Albatross design is characterised by water hazards and huge greens. A member of the European Tour Properties network since 2011, the course is receiving a €7million pre-Ryder Cup upgrade which started last summer.

Do it yourself: Four nights' B&B at the on-site four-star Novotel hotel Saint Quentin Golf National, two rounds on the Albatross and two on the Aigle course, one buggy for two rounds, 10% discount in the on-site pro shops, a bucket of balls for each round and access to the Albatross VIP lounge area, costs £392 per person/€539 (based on double room sharing). Valid Jul 6-Aug 8 (Thurs-Mon except during special events & subject to availability). To book e-mail concierge@golf-national.com, quoting TG Travel Awards or visit www.le-golf-national.com 📱

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The result, never ending happiness... Discover it at www.lamangaclub.com



LA MANGA CLUB
sport & leisure



**BEST RESORT (NORTH)****Slaley Hall**

Why it won: It has two superb, contrasting courses (Hunting and Priestman) plus a luxury Edwardian mansion hotel, all plotted within 1,000 acres of moorland and forest. The accommodation and facilities are top drawer while both 18-hole courses have seen European Tour action over the years.

Do it yourself: Sunday driver package includes dinner, B&B accommodation and 36 holes of golf, from £89pp. To book call 0845 241 9785.

**BEST COURSE (NORTH)****Royal Lytham & St Annes**

Why it won: Fellow Open venue Royal Birkdale has previously dominated this category, but Royal Lytham has now turned the tables. It's not a beautiful links with awesome sea views, but it is one of the most challenging and demanding (as Adam Scott found to his cost in the 2012 Open). You have to plot your way past 200-plus bunkers of the most penal kind.

Do it yourself: One night's B&B stay in the dormy house at Royal Lytham, one round at Royal Lytham and one at St. Anne's Old Links costs from £242 per person (Mon-Fri). Valid until the end of Sept. To book call 01704 807800.

**BEST RESORT (SOUTH)****The Grove**

Why it won: Ten years after Tiger won a WGC event here, London's so-called country club

stages the British Masters in October. Conveniently close to the M25, the five-star luxury hotel is supported by a spa and fine dining. The Kyle Phillips-designed course is in great condition year-round with the greens arguably among the best around.

Do it yourself: TG readers can book 18 holes of golf at The Grove for £80 (weekdays and weekends) until the end of February 2016. Call 01923 294266 or email tee.time@thegrove.co.uk, ref TGROVE.

**BEST COURSE (SOUTH)****Sunningdale Old**

Why it won: Along with the equally stunning New, the mystical Old guarantees a perfect day out. It's a classic heathland layout framed by Scots pines and swathes of heather and gorse. Inland courses don't come any more scenic than this magical beauty, which replaces its near neighbour Wentworth's West course as southern England's No.1.

Do it yourself: You can play for £125 until Mar 31 – nearly half the normal green fee rate! To book call 01344 621681.

**BEST RESORT (WEST)****Bovey Castle**

Why it won: It guarantees the ultimate great escape on the edge of Dartmoor National Park, with a gorgeous manor house hotel and a quirky course set out on hillsides and a valley bottom. Visitors can also stay in 22 three-storey country lodges within Bovey's exquisite grounds.

Do it yourself: Two nights' B&B (for two sharing a Classic room) and two rounds costs

from £598 for two people. To book call 01647 445007.

**BEST COURSE (WEST)****St Mellion (Nicklaus)**

Why it won: It's one of the most challenging and beautiful inland courses in the land. It was Jack Nicklaus' first UK course project and the 18-times Major champion is justifiably proud of his work. It has staged six Benson & Hedges International Opens and you can even tackle it for half-price thanks to 2-FORE!-1.

Do it yourself: Exclusive TG stay & play offer: book a one or two-night golf break (package inclusive of dinner, B&B) and receive a complimentary lunch as part of your stay. To book call 01579 352001 and quote TG/STM2016.

**BEST RESORT & COURSE EAST AND MIDLANDS****The Belfry**

Why it won Another double triumph for the venue, which has staged a record-breaking four Ryder Cups. And The Belfry is now even more appealing after its £26m off-course refurbishment. Golfers love the challenge of the Brabazon course, the scene of so much Ryder Cup drama. The ultimate test of parkland golf is always in immaculate condition and is ably supported by the neighbouring PGA National and Derby, plus superb practice and custom-fitting facilities.

Do it yourself: Two nights' B&B (in a Signature double or twin room) and a round on all three courses, costs from £229pp. To book call 0844 980 0600 or visit www.TheBelfry.com for more information. ➔



Royal approval
The iconic green-and-white hues of Lytham's clubhouse.



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of Murcia
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murciaturistica.es/en



Ryder Cup drama
The 17th green on
the Twenty Ten
course, Celtic Manor.



BEST RESORT

Gleneagles

Why it won: The 'Palace in the Glens' dominated this section yet again, with the world-famous resort comfortably retaining its crown. Set in 850 acres of Perthshire countryside, it is home to three quality 18-hole courses, fabulous accommodation, a multi award-winning spa, fine dining and an array of exhilarating outdoor activities.

Do it yourself: Golf & More package includes overnight stay with full Scottish breakfast and use of leisure facilities, a round on the PGA Centenary, King's or Queen's. TG readers will receive a complimentary room upgrade when quoting "Today's Golfer". Prices from £340 per room per night. Call 0800 704705.



Braid's best?

The green of the classic 15th on the King's, Gleneagles.

compared to £175 in high season (fairway mats may be in use). To book call 01334 466666.



BEST COURSE

Royal Porthcawl

Why it won: The legendary links edged Celtic Manor's Twenty Ten course off top spot. Porthcawl has staged many prestigious amateur and professional events including six Amateur Championships, the Walker and Curtis Cups and, most recently the 2014 British Senior Open won by Bernhard Langer.

Do it yourself: Enjoy a midweek fourball until Feb 26 for £240, including coffee & bacon rolls on arrival. To book call 01656 782251.



BEST COURSE

St Andrews Old

Why it won: Pushed by Gleneagles' King's, but nothing can compete with the thrill of teeing it up in front of the R&A clubhouse and following in the footsteps of golf's biggest names as you get to grips with the Road Hole, the Swilcan Burn, the Valley of Sin etc... It is the round of a lifetime, provided your name is pulled from the daily ballot – although at this time of year that is much more likely, and you can tee it up for a cut-price £85.

Do it yourself: A round costs £85 until Mar 31



BEST RESORT

Celtic Manor

Why it won: Looms above the M4, but once through its grand entrance you couldn't feel further away. It has three 18-hole courses (Twenty Ten, Roman Road & Montgomerie), two hotels (five-star main hotel and four-star Manor House) and, since 2014, luxury self-catering Hunter Lodges which can sleep up to eight people in four en-suite bedrooms.

Do it yourself: Exclusive for TG readers – a dozen free Srixon AD333 golf balls for anyone booking a fourball in 2016. Bookings must be made between Jan 20-Mar 17, but can be for any date in 2016. Quote "TGDOZEN" when booking. Call 01633 410263.



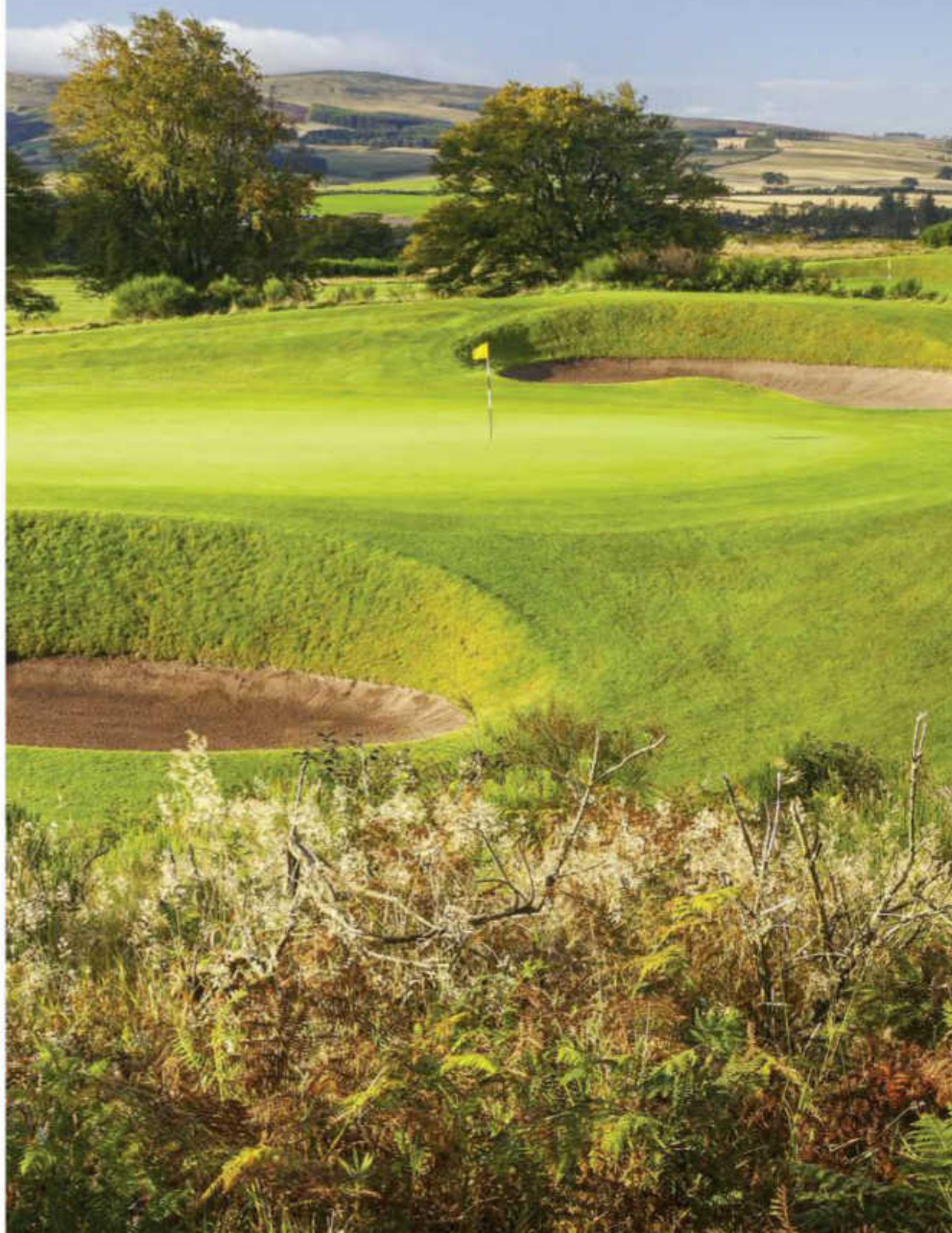
BEST COURSE & RESORT

The K Club

Why it won: Another double success for Ireland's only Ryder Cup host. It continues to profit from its memorable Ryder Cup in 2006, which saw a famous and emotional European victory inspired by Darren Clarke. The K Club will play a key role in Captain Clarke's preparations for the 2016 Ryder Cup as it hosts the Dubai Duty Free Irish Open in May. The challenging Palmer course is backed up by the neighbouring Smurfit, a fine parkland, as well as a five-star hotel.

Do it yourself: Two nights' B&B, a four-course evening meal, one round of golf on either course plus full access to K Health & Fitness facilities, costs from €285. To book call 003531 6017200 or e-mail sales@kclub.ie

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[†] World Forest Resources, 1953 and UN FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment, 2010

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20 QUESTIONS

David Howell on Starsky & Hutch, David Cameron and Usain Bolt

1. When did you first shoot under par?

I shot 70 at Broome Manor when I was 14.

2. What has been the highlight of your career?

Winning the 2006 BMW PGA. However, playing in my first winning Ryder Cup in 2004 was a lifelong dream.

3. What has been the best shot of your career to date?

An 18-inch putt to win my first tournament in six years in 2004. I still remember how nervous I was, thinking, 'If you miss this, maybe you'll never win again'.

3. One mulligan you'd like to have?

My second on the last of the 2014 China Open. Missing the fairway with a 7-iron on a lay-up; had I hit that fairway I'd have been in a play-off, at the very worst.

4. Favourite course in the world?

Augusta. Everything that goes with playing there in the tournament makes it a real treat.

5. Favourite UK course?

Loch Lomond. It's an underrated course.

6. Favourite hole in the world?

18th at St Andrews. Or the 1st. That piece of turf is something that any keen golfer should experience.

7. Favourite view in golf?

There's a tee at New South Wales GC perched on the edge of Botany Bay, where Captain Cook landed.

8. Favourite club in the bag?

My putter. I've used it for 10 years.

9. Favourite film?

Starsky & Hutch with Ben Stiller and Owen Wilson. I can't help but laugh at it.

10. Favourite musician or group?

I listen to music, but I know nothing about it.

11. Favourite sports team?

I'm known on Tour as the worst football supporter – I quote six teams as my favourite.

12. Favourite sportsman?

Usain Bolt. There is something pure about being the fastest man on the planet.

13. Favourite sportswoman?

Charley Hull, a lovely girl and an amazing talent.

14. Any superstitions?

If I start with a cap on, I have to wear one for every shot. In the Ryder Cup at Kiawah Island the wind got Ray Floyd's cap on the 18th, so he took it off and I thought, 'He'll hit a bad shot,' and he did. That left a mark on me.

15. Favourite TV show?

The Office.

16. Favourite holiday destination?

I don't really do holidays. I do too much travelling.

17. Dream foursome of non-professionals?

David Cameron, Nigel Farage and Bill Clinton.

18. Dream fourball of professionals?

Palmer, Watson & Nicklaus. I've not played any of them.

19. Who's your best mate on Tour? Mark Foster.

20. What golf rule would you like to change?

Ball moving on the green, but it has changed a bit now.

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if I missed
it I might
never win
again'**



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